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LETTERS

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No. 25?
Dear Spare Rib,
I have a copy of every issue of Spare Rib since it first began, except no. 25. This is now sold out, which is a shattering blow. Has anyone got a no. 25 which they wouldn't mind parting with? (Red cover - Her Sweet Jerome/Natural Childbirth) I can offer in exchange a copy of no. 26, or 30p.
Please have a search....
Love,
Suzanne Perkins
108 Oxford Gardens
London W10 6NG

Sexist Toys
Dear spare Rib,
Awareness of the sexist nature of children's books is gradually spreading. The sexism of toys and play facilities is hardly recognised as yet. I was shocked at a recent visit to Hamleys toy shop in Regent Street at the very limited and almost totally sexist choice of toys. 70% of the toys seemed to be concerned with aggression - guns, tanks etc. Most of the others were for playing 'home-making'. (These included a range of kitchen cupboards for children to rival an adult's dream kitchen, with all its competitive luxury implications.)
The toys 'for girls' include a large range of pretty dolls. They have no doll with a penis.
We should also be examining the underlying sexism of the neutral pre-school playgroup or nursery class. The Pre-School Playgroups Association's doctrine of free play allows children to play out only those roles familiar to them. The most familiar is the home-maker, who is cooking, cleaning, ironing etc., facilities for which will be found in the wendy house of every good playgroup. Should we not be using the influential preschool years to change the roles available, if necessary by deliberate teaching of new roles, by more visits out to see a variety of jobs, by 'corners' other than home corners, by the deliberate provision of dressing up clothes of occupations other than that of nurse. (Apart from fighters and policemen's clothes, the nurse's uniform is the only one sold by Hamleys. You can't even buy a doctor's coat!)
I should be glad to hear from other parents/workers with similar concerns.
Yours with best wishes,
Marion Macalpine.
30 Ruston Mews,
Ladbroke Grove,
London W.11

Down to earth
Dear Spare Rib people,
Recently I obtained an issue of your magazine in the U.S. Growing steadily intrigued by the number of feminist magazines popping up all over the country, I was delighted to be able to read Spare Rib and compare it with similar magazines in this country. I was impressed by the realistic attitudes and down to earth style of writing as opposed to the loftier styles and attitudes taken by some of the other magazines.
Sincerely yours,
Brenda Kustin,
Massachusetts,
U.S.A.

Anorexia and Fasting
Dear Spare Rib Collective,
I was fascinated by your Anorexia Nervosa article as a woman specialist once diagnosed that I had a mild form of this "disease" - (last year I lived mainly on tea and honey).
You seem to me to miss the positive sides of not-eating! Fasting gets you high, as most religions acknowledge, whereas eating for most people involves the rather unsavoury business of killing off representatives of some of the other species of life on this planet. The ultimate goal of human beings may be to become like the yogi woman in India who has lived for the last 50 years by metabolising sunlight. Milarepa spent most of his life in Tibetan caves living on nettles and became proficient at astral travelling and could subdivide to be in 15 places at once! Meher Baba lived on about a pint of milk a day. Proust spent the last five (and most productive) years of his life living on coffee. And so on.

Try it and see! If you need extra creative energy for any particular hurdle ahead, try not eating for a couple of days. I know I then feel much more "centered" and purposeful and quick-witted.
Fasting might even be a less deadening cure for "Anorexia Nervosa" than the cures you describe: fly the sufferers on the N.H.S. to an ashram in India where it's normal to fast for nine full days after the new moon, and the sufferers, who might previously have thought only of slimming, may realise that both not-eating and eating can be fulfilling experiences. (And if that doesn't work, there's enough mass-starvation in India to shock them to their senses!)

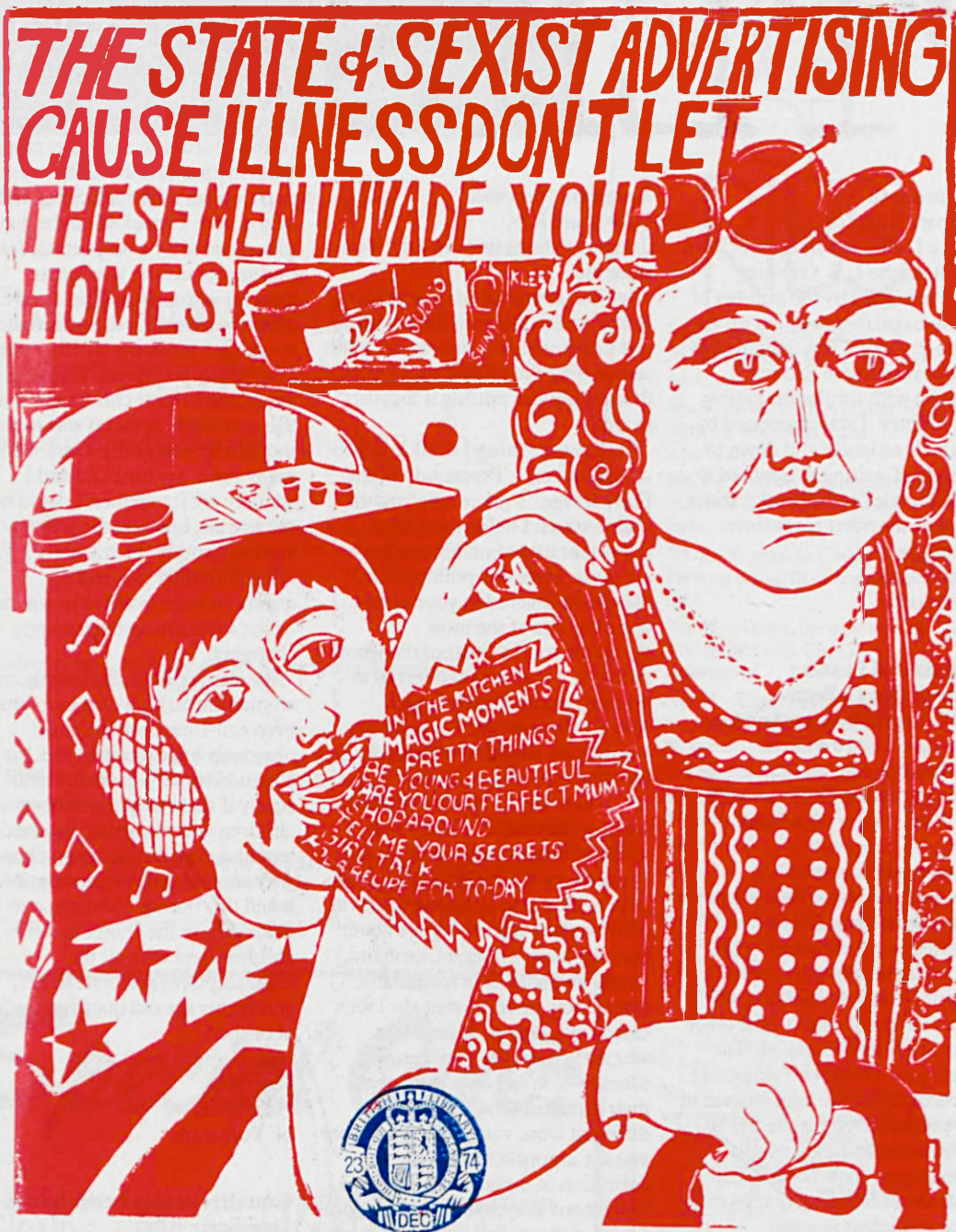
Yours,
Annabelle Bronson,
London W.11.

Anorexia Nervosa
Dear Spare Rib,
Congratulations on your article on anorexia.
I've had anorexia for nine years so I'm very familiar with the problems and therefore really appreciate your researching the subject so thoroughly and putting it together so well.
There is one thing I think you've missed out on - 'Perception of the Body Image.' I'm sending you this article which I believe is a very important part of understanding anorexia. I feel this point should have been covered in your article, since it is one of the most misunderstood aspects of the whole problem. I realise you referred to the perception of body image directly through the illustrations, but nobody would take them so literally, surely?
Also you say '... she really cannot see how thin she is!' I think that needs a lot more explaining. Can't you see how comforting this information is to someone who is in daily conflict with everyone about how she looks - doctors, husband, family and friends in formidable conspiracy, insisting that she looks emaciated, drawn, Belsen-like, when you cannot see this image of yourself? You can only think that their standards and values are different from your own. Therefore you are in conflict about the definition of these words and their judgement in applying them to you.
A lot of things fell into place; a lot of hostility towards the people trying to help me dropped away because I realised we were not seeing the same thing. It was not a battle of opinion and judgement after all. I can more readily accept that and live with that if I have to. It was, and is, a tremendous relief to really understand this and it helped to break the terrible conflict with those around me.
Name and address supplied.

Like a stuffed humpty
Dear Spare Rib
I have decided to go back to College in order to take O and A levels, and it has become necessary for me to find part-time employment, as my husband is also a student, so as you can imagine we are in an impoverished state. Finding part-time employment is indeed a difficult task, especially if you are married, and 22 years of age. Apparently at my time of life there is a high risk for me to bear masses

of kids with great abundance, or so I'm told.
In answer to my application I was summoned by the Chief Admin. Officer of our local hospital for interview. With clean underwear, neck washed, hair brushed I started on this journey with fingers crossed. With my head raised high, overflowing with confidence and exuberance I knocked on the door; to be greeted by a bespectacled, bow tied gent (I use the word gent loosely) who before I could tell him how competent I was, immediately proceeded to ask me whether or not I had children, wanted children, or was going to have children within the next week, in fact it was so bad I thought he was going to ask me how many times my husband and I actually got it together. I could not say a word, I just sat there like a stuffed humpty. Fortunately I was offered another job, and no questions were asked as to whether or not I was interested in nappy changing.
My main point is, that surely any woman embarking on a part-time or even full-time position, must obviously have weighed the situation up very carefully, and surely if she was going to have children within six months she would not apply for the position. So why are married women continually asked this boring question; now that women have the choice to have children, and with all the contraceptives available to her, surely this age old question could be abolished.
Keep up the good work,
Kate Hill,
Harrogate,
N. Yorkshire.

Equality begins in the home
Dear Spare Rib,
It would be helpful if readers could bring themselves to give up their copies of Spare Rib after reading them and leave them in doctors' or dentists' waiting rooms where more women would get to hear of the magazine.
I like the children's book section. I'm bringing up a couple of liberated women to be, so I only hope that there is a couple of liberated, equality minded males - I'm afraid that seems to be the only way to rid ourselves of the chauvinists by starting from scratch.
Most of the girls I talk to seem to think that we will get equality in work, have nurseries etc in a short time, but it will be equality in the home and the sharing of bringing up children which will be the hard slog.
So you women with sons - act now to save the women of tomorrow from what we have to go through.
Yours sincerely
Dodie Best,
Berks.



See Red Poster Workshop consists of two women who make posters for local community groups like tenant's associations and for women's groups, conferences and meetings. An example of their work is the disc jockey poster produced for the Women and Health Conference. The idea came whilst working all day with the radio on. The continual barrage of sexist chatter produced an angry response!

Cattle market

Dear Spare Rib,
Yet another example of society's attitude to women – especially unattached ones. Last Saturday my flatmate and I decided to seek reminiscences of youth by going to a discotheque – Dingwalls at Camden Lock. We drove halfway across London, to be told that on Friday and Saturday nights single girls are charged £2.00 each to get in whereas a girl with a boy pays £2.00 for both of them. Presumably the discrimination works against single men too. There were girls standing out in the freezing cold (you can't actually set foot inside the door until you've paid, so there is no chance of sussing the place out first) waiting for an unattended male to turn up at the

cash desk, in order to gain this 100% reduction – talk about a cattle market.

The girl at the cash desk mumbled something about keeping out crowds of blokes who start fights, I asked to see the manager who had conveniently 'just left the office'.

The manager may claim that the rule is fair because it applies to both sexes but – women generally earn less than men and £2.00 is a lot of money – are the belligerent crowds of men likely to be LESS belligerent for being picked up by a total stranger, who is under an immediate monetary obligation to them.

Yours sincerely,
Susan Hardman,
London E7.

Biased film reviews

Dear Spare Rib,
I have been reading your magazine since the very first issue and I think it is a wonderful magazine except for your film reviews which I absolutely hate and despise. Your review on 'Chinatown' finally made me write to you. 'Naturally we spend most of the film suspecting her'. Maybe you did; but I didn't nor did the person I was with, nor anybody else I know, she had to be a sympathetic character, as that was the whole point of the film – the repetition of his experience of trying to help a woman and only hurting her. You can't run down a film because the story has a hero instead of a heroine. I certainly did not think it 'No more than a slick and stylish exercise in

fashionable nostalgia'. You have a right to your opinion but a good film review does more than give someone's opinion. At least when I read 'Films and Filming' they say both what is good and bad and sometimes even admit that they may be incapable of appreciating a film. Try reviewing a film you like for a change. I think your reviews are very biased and unfair. It would be more helpful to readers if you picked films you thought were good.

Sincerely
Nancy Preston,
Leeds 8

Keith Joseph sued?

Dear Sister Rib,
Like hundreds of women I am furious! The reason – Sir Keith Joseph's pronouncement (Sat. 19th Oct.) regarding one-parent families. He says that unmarried girls, deserted and divorced women are unable to give emotional stability to their children, that the children become delinquent and fill borstals, prisons and are a degenerative influence on society. I am equally furious with J. Gormley (rep. for the Mineworkers) when he responded to the statement by asking S.K. Joseph if his intention was to cast aspersions on "the noble working man". 'No' came the reply. Clearly it is the noble working woman he is attacking.

Politicians and Trade Unions can help us financially and by improving facilities instead of adding to the problems of one-parent families by isolating them with labels of failure and the responsibility for society's ills. Men generally can help by meeting their responsibilities towards their children when marriages or relationships break-down. Equally, men living with their partners and children should take parenthood seriously and not as they do at present (generally) by leaving the women with the greater part of the up-bringing of children. Many married women, and I suspect S.K. Joseph's wife, bring up their families virtually single-handed – though usually without the financial hardship of the mother alone.

What a pity S.K. Joseph didn't give the names of any one-parent families, we could then have sued him!

Perhaps there are people who are living happy, stable and 'socially successful' lives who were raised by mothers alone and are as angry as I am that their mothers have been attacked so unjustly? Any such people and those in a one-parent situation might like to contact me through 'Spare Rib' so that we can answer S.K. Joseph. Love,
Hilda Bartle,
Ilford, Essex.

Letters 3,4

Feature 6 **Lucy.** Interviewed by her daughter Liz. Lucy talks about the jobs she's had, from being a cleaner to typing for Sylvia Pankhurst, about the husband she married because he was as tall as she was and the women she's known and the ideas they shared throughout a life crowded with poverty.

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Fertility and Tory morality. A feminist view of the arguments surrounding Sir Keith Joseph's speech on social class and the birth rate.

Economics . . . How are Profits Determined? Jean Gardiner explains the role of profit and looks at the origins of the current economic crisis.

Overseas. Notes on Portugal . . . a background to women's struggles since the coup in April.

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Film. 'The Night Porter' attacked by Margaret Walters.

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Please send a stamped addressed envelope with all unsolicited manuscripts.

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Spare Rib Collective: Rose Ades, Marion Fudger, Rosie Parker, Marsha Rowe, Ann Scott, Ann Smith; with help from Mary Cecil, Lynn Hutton-Williams, Jane Wilson.

Lucy



*Lucy's life spans most of this century.
She looks back now, and describes it to
her daughter Liz.*

From her mother, Lucy inherited a brave and bitter legacy – a woman's perseverance against poverty in raising a family and a woman's isolated courage confused by male prejudice.

Family

I was brought up in a Labour family – very strong Labour. Of course, that does influence you a lot. My Mum used to go to Co-op meetings and go round with leaflets for the Labour Party. Even with nine children. She was always working – never stopped really. She had a very, very hard life, a terrible life of semi-slavery – having children one every other year for 18 years.

She still managed to smile, of course. Don't ask me how. In 1918 when she got a council house in Walthamstow she thought it was Buckingham Palace after the old terraced house which was a dreadful place. In the kitchen there was one of those things with coal – a kitchener, they called them. You had to cook by coal. You can imagine what it was like having to clean it out – such hard work, all so primitive. We had candles.

But I don't know where she got her socialism from. She was a very intelligent woman, very determined. She got us educated. She used to go out to meetings although she spent her whole life having babies. You'd have thought she'd have no spirit left at all. When she came home from meetings she used to sing 'Now comrades come rally' when she was doing the washing up. We used to laugh to ourselves. But we were brought up to the *Internationale* – can't do much better than that, can you?

My father was a drunk. He was killed in the First Great War, and it may seem an awful thing to say, but my mother was quite relieved. I can remember him coming in drunk. He'd start hitting my Mum. We used to sit at the top of the stairs. We were terrified of him. But when he was sober he was quite nice. I think the thing with him was, he was a very weak man – all drunks are weak – he'd come home, see the poverty of the house, the nine kids, and he didn't know how to get out of it. Only into the pub. Not that I'm excusing him, because my poor old Mum had to stick there with all the poverty, and he never did anything about not having any children.

It wasn't quite the same with Dad. (*Dad is Lucy's husband. Ed.*) With him it was debt. The more he got into debt, the more he drank. It was a snowball of owing money in the pub, and owing other people money. It built up. So he'd drink to drown his sorrows. Also, he regarded women as absolute fools. I believe my father did as well. When I had Joy (*her first daughter*) Dad was quite pleased. But he wanted you to be a boy, a little replica of himself, who he was going to call Robert junior. Which is all part of the chauvinism touch, isn't it? He was so terribly disappointed that you weren't Robert junior that he went and got drunk again. He never came and saw me in the nursing home. He used to keep on, in pubs, wherever he went, 'My house is full of bloody women', 'I live in a household of women'. Which to him was the rock bottom thing to happen to a man. Mind you, I can understand it to a certain extent. But I wonder, if you'd have been a boy, would it have made any difference? He would have nagged a boy silly. He didn't nag you because he wasn't interested in you. Aren't you lucky!

School

My brother paid £9 a term for me to go to Walthamstow County High School in the early 20s. Although he paid for me, when I got there I felt terribly poor. There were very posh people there – girls from homes like the Canon So-and-So, all the doctors and professionals – every one of them paid for. There was a quota of scholarship kids, 5 in a class of 25. The posh ones had nothing to do with the scholarship kids. You always knew. We all had the same uniform but it was the way they spoke. They always had such beautiful blouses, shoes and stockings. The class distinction was very pronounced.

I just sat there at school and didn't listen to a word. It all went over my head, all of it. I used to sit and look at the teacher, fascinated, looking at her little idiosyncracies. I didn't learn much, but I enjoyed it. To me it was like going to Buckingham Palace. I used to think, isn't it wonderful to be able to come here. The teachers didn't worry really, they didn't care. You just sat there and went to sleep, more or less.



Lucy when she was 8 years old.



Lucy and George, the brother who paid for her schooling

Work

When I left school I knew nothing, so I went into the Civil Service. I made the tea for a bit, then I got in as a typist. In those days it was all women. Two thousand women in that building, Waterloo Bridge House. You could see them all gradually getting older and older and older. And us younger ones used to really despise them as they hadn't got married. There were a lot of them because, in that generation, all the men had been killed in the War. We used to think, 'We're not going to stay here till we're 60, like those spinsters.'

So everybody did their damnest to get a bloke. It didn't matter who it was as long as it wore trousers. Then they used to come in and flaunt their engagement rings. We had little celebration parties. They'd be flashing this diamond and all the others would be as jealous as hell. It was terrible. There were six of us friends. They all gradually got engaged, and then there was me left. People used to think I was peculiar. I felt awful, like some strange, wierd monster.

The supervisor was a spinster. She was a cow! In her 50's. We thought she was ghastly, fancy being a miss. We were horrible, but that was the pattern. In those days you really despised anyone who wasn't married by at least 25. These poor souls. It was pitiful really. There was one - she was always writing to Lonelyhearts clubs. Rather like Jean Rhys, that type of person. She was always heavily painted - rouge, lipstick, ginger hair. Just to try and get a man. I don't think she ever got anybody. It was terribly sad. But, of course, we used to laugh at her. When I joined Women's Liberation, and I thought back to all those things, I felt terribly ashamed. But a lot of it still goes on, right?

Men

I was very tall, and whenever I went to a dance I always used to get midgets who hung round my waist and laid their heads on me bosom. I felt absolutely awful. The only way to pick up a boy was to go to a dance. We used to go to the Lyceum Ballroom, which I thought was, oh my dear, the absolute ultimate in sophistication. We'd all stand round like the cattle market - just stand there. All my friends would get blokes - but when they saw how tall I was I never got a partner. They'd look you up and down. Most humiliating. I felt really sad, really down. I thought I'd never get a bloke.

I was 26 when I met Dad. I was really on the back of the shelf, covered in dust, beginning to give up hope. My elder sister had said, 'Look, Luce, it's time you got married, and if you don't hurry up, you've had it.' People used to say to my Mum, 'Isn't it terrible Lucy's not married.' I think my poor old Mum felt a bit funny about it. She'd say, 'Well, she doesn't like men.' It was just something to say. But, of course, it was the worst thing she could've said.

Then there was that famous occasion on Wood Street Station when I met Dad. The worst day of my life. Why I ever did it, I'll never know. Mind you, I was 26. I'd just got over typhoid fever and I was bald. My head was covered in down! I used to wear hats all the time. Dad didn't care tuppence what I looked like, as long as I was tall. When Dad asked me out, I thought it was wonderful. At long last! That was the beginning of the end, of the rot. But I wouldn't have had you and Joy, otherwise, would I?

Dad was a male chauvinist pig - as were most of his generation. I can remember my Mum cleaning out my father's shoes. There she was, putting the blacking on. His slippers were always ready for him although he was a right bastard. But it was the recognized thing. The women waited on men hand and foot.

With Dad I did the same. You didn't expect them to do anything. Of course you hadn't done anything all day, except slog and wash and iron and cook and clean. But Dad was always saying how stupid women were. They couldn't be very good mothers, let alone anything else. He thought the women in his office were silly. It was only in the last year of his life that he admitted one or two women comptometers in his office in Smithfields were quite bright. But grudgingly.

He had a very low opinion of women and, of course, it rubs off on you in the end. I knew I knew more than Dad, or different things anyhow. He didn't know French, for example. But he said it to me so often that I really thought I was stupid. It wasn't really till Women's Liberation that I change my mind a bit. Silly, isn't it? All those years. Even now I've got no confidence in myself. Never will have now. It's amazing - men are doing that all the time. But now, with some women, the fact that they've gone out to work has given them a bit of confidence, just from doing a job. But on the other hand, when you see some women, especially young ones, how they take everything from Men - but everything - it makes you weep. They run around, wait on the men, even some married ones in women's liberation groups.



Lucy and her husband.





Lucy as a young woman.



Lucy (third from the right).



Lucy (in the middle) with friends from Waterloo Bridge House.

Marriage

Dad started drinking soon after we were married. He had always been waited on hand and foot by his mother. He never did a thing there. Of course, his father was a drunk too. Grandma (*Lucy's mother-in-law*) sometimes had both of them lying on the kitchen floor, drunk father and son. But Grandma thought Dad was the cat's whiskers, right to the end, no matter what he did. He thought I was going to carry on where she left off. Which, of course, I did. I used to have the meal ready every evening. He never came in till midnight. Every night there was meat and two veg. In the end, I didn't bother to cook it, do you blame me?

I waited up every night in terror. For 30 years you sit there with your heart thumping. That's going to affect your body in the end, isn't it? Wears it out, you can't cope. Maybe that's why I had that heart attack recently. Hearing his footsteps coming up the road – an accumulation of that for years and you don't have that high an opinion of men and marriage. But when this Women's Liberation came along and you've experienced it all, what they talk about, I thought, wow! It really changed my life.

The feminism Lucy knew about in her youth, symbolised by the women's vote, did not connect up with her experience. Her brief spell working as a typist for Sylvia Pankhurst in the 40's reinforced the class division.

When you've got children, you're in a terribly awkward position as regards getting jobs. Moreover, if Dad had known I was working, he would have deducted my wages off the housekeeping. We were desperately poor. I had to get a few hours work and know the money would be mine.

The only job really available was cleaning. In those days we were given 1s 9d an hour, and we had to clean a whole house from top to bottom in three hours. I don't think it's very different now. They still have to work terribly hard. That's a thing we want to wipe out, don't we, that women with children have to do that kind of work. The snag was then, of course, that there were no labour-saving devices. You were lucky if you got a Hoover. Everything was done on your hands and knees. You had to polish the floor, a whole parquet flooring, on your hands and knees. Then polishing the furniture, scrubbing the stairs, no minute mops or anything like that. Then there were coal fires. You had to lug the coal from bunkers in all weathers and clean the fire places out. Very heavy work. And the lady of the house would walk around watching you as you did it all, the corners, you know. You really worked very hard for which you got the princely sum of six shillings for a morning's work. You'd often stay after your three hours, doing extra jobs. She'd say, 'You don't mind washing the breakfast things, do you?' They'd leave everything for you to do.

There were so many women in those days looking for jobs in school hours, and also jobs where the tax people and your husband wouldn't know about your money. After that I got a job cleaning in a hospital from 7am to 3pm for about £3 a week. This was more hours than private cleaning, but I still didn't have to declare it for tax. We had to go down on our hands and knees and scrub the landings, the stone stairs, the toilets and, at lunchtime, wash all the dirty plates and scrub the kitchen out. You had a ten minute break timed by the Sisters of the ward. The women who worked there mostly had kids. They knew these women were glad of the money. You never said anything because there were plenty of other women to take your place. How I got home afterwards I really don't know, but I thought £3 was a fortune.

Then I went ironing ties when we were very, very desperate. We owed the rent. I could go mornings, and it fitted into school hours. There's always a board outside the place – Ironers Wanted, Machinists Wanted. You know jolly well it's terrible work when the board is permanently advertising. So I went in. He couldn't get hold of me quick enough although he was very disheartened to think I hadn't had any experience. I stood at this very high ironing board every day from 8am to 1pm. All the other women were machining and folding, and we were ironing. We never stopped. When they brought us a cup of tea round, we still went on ironing and drunk it standing at the board. We never sat down for four hours which was all wrong really, that chap should've been prosecuted. I shouldn't be surprised if they're still doing it to this day.

Of course they can get away with it. They're down side streets, hundreds of them, these sweat shops, no better than Dickens' time, I'm sure. All women with kids, needing the money. You're glad of ten bob to have your shoes mended. I used to come home with my right arm feeling as if it was withered. All day long, you can imagine, it took me a couple of hours to recover the use of my arm. Well, one day he called me into his office and said, 'You're not pulling your weight.' I was absolutely staggered. I never >

stopped working, nobody was allowed to talk, he'd give you a black look if you said a word. I couldn't believe it. He said, 'You only do 150 an hour and the other girls do 240. Now 150 an hour, that means two a minute. Just you try it, you have a go. But the other women had been doing it for years, they were very deft. I was livid. When I think what I would've said to him now, now that I'm a 'liberated woman'. I'm dying to go past there now and throw a brick in his office and talk to the poor devils still at their benches. Outside there were two Rolls Royces, and he had a beautiful mansion in its own grounds. Of course, no union at all. That's what's needed, The Sweaters Union. If the poor devils tried that, they'd sack them all. Well, I walked out and I never went back. What I think is so dreadful is that it's still going on.

I worked for Sylvia Pankhurst for a bit as a part-time typist. It was in Sand's Lane Woodford, in the early 1940s. I can understand how she turned into that cantankerous old woman. She was the odd one out all her life, her mother preferred Christabel. So I did this job for the Emperor of Ethiopia. His daughter, Princess Tsahai, died of TB so he wanted to build a hospital in Ethiopia for people who suffered from TB and Sylvia Pankhurst was helping him. We used to type the letters to Lord, this, and the Countess of that, all the aristocracy. She'd dictate. She did get this hospital built. She was terribly bad tempered, to us women. If you went in to take notes, she'd dictate a bit, then she'd suddenly say, 'Go outside. I'll call you again in a minute.' Then she did a pee in a pot under the desk. She had a weak bladder. Then she'd call us back. So she had that trouble. But she'd never talk to us as women. She was very authoritarian. Do this, do that. She'd scream at us, 'We were all stupid.'

She'd got this son, Richard, who she doted on. There was this Italian bloke hovering in the background. He was like, you know, Lady Chatterly's Lover, the gardener, only not so nice. An old, old man. Looked like Rumpelstiltskin. He used to lurk in the rhododendrons and the blackberry bushes, all wizened, bald and dirty. We just thought he was the odd job man. But it turned out he was the father of this Richard. I don't blame her anyway.

Eventually she sacked me. She picked on me one morning. She'd lost a letter and I couldn't find it because the filing system there was so dreadful. She started telling me I was stupid, that she'd never met anyone as silly as me. Did I ever have a job before I came there.

That last bit really got me, telling me I was unemployable. I got so mad that I retaliated. I've only done it once or twice in my life. When I think what I would've said now. When I got outside I was shaking. I regretted it, like I did when I stood up to Dad. Now I'm glad. So that was the end of Sylvia Pankhurst. She was quite a character. I never thought about votes for women. She was always on about 'My friend the Emperor', who wrote letters to her, 'Dear Sylvia'. It made me puke. I've always been Labour. As for the Suffragettes, we thought they were a bit odd, really, although we were grateful to them for getting the vote. As for the Emperor, they've chucked him out, haven't they. The Lion of Judah has bitten the dust.

Lucy went on the first Women's Liberation march in London in 1970 and she is in the same women's group as both her daughters, Joy and Liz. 'Women's Liberation was such a revelation to me.'

Women's Liberation was such a revelation to me. Let's be free, be somebody in our own right, not just an adjunct to a man. That, to me, was marvellous. That first march we went on on my birthday. I really enjoyed that, walking. 'What do we want. LIBERATION.' To me that was absolutely the ultimate. A woman of my age, walking down the Strand, shouting 'Liberation'. Cor! Blimey!

We were really downtrodden, our generation. I wish they could ail come now.

Later in life, when I was 50, I took up infant teaching. My friend Maud pushed me. She made the appointment and I had to go. I said, 'No, no, I can't.' I went because I didn't want to let her down. But I'd made up my mind the headmistress would take one look at me and say, 'What! You. Get out of here.' But she didn't. It all turned out fantastically well. She said, 'Alright, Lucy, start on Monday.' I didn't know a damn thing. She gave me the *Janet and John Manual* to read. I read it from front to back.

When I got to school the following Monday I was terrified. You know the way kids look at you. I wanted to run. But it all turned out well. I gave me a terrific fillip. But I didn't tell Dad about it. I didn't want him coming round and bugging it all up - which he would've done. It was my little secret weapon. I'd think, 'You don't know what I do all day.'

When I first went to Women's Liberation meetings I was terrified. All those frightfully brainy types. I thought they were lovely girls, though. So brainy, so beautiful. I enjoyed listening to them. I wouldn't have dreamt of opening my mouth. Of course, it took us some time to get out of that, didn't it Liz? But I learned a lot, listening, oh yes. For us working class it was like

going into one of the seminars at Oxford. But we really looked forward to it. We went in the rain and the sleet. Sometimes we were the only people who turned up. One evening there was only Jenny and us. It was lovely. She talked to us like friends. We were able to say what we thought about different things.

Of course, I don't think we would have thought about it all if it hadn't been for Joy. She showed me this article about it from *Time* magazine. I used to read lots of papers, *Shrew*, all the literature. It changed my attitude. I knew it was all left wing, socialist like.

Then there was the night cleaners campaign. Night after night we went leafletting. In the snow. We'd stand outside buildings in the city, late at night, talking to the cleaners. Such a struggle. Even now they're not unionised. None of the TGWU would help at the strike of Asian women at Heathrow. That kills me. Rotten stinking union. Then, you say, women join unions! What are you to do. The men won't back you up. It's going to be hell of a struggle. That Suffragette business was in 1910, wasn't it? That's 64 years ago. Where are we? A bit better off, I suppose. The politicians are getting round to it a bit. Look at the Labour manifesto. They've never talked like that before. It's very slow, but a slight improvement. Women's lib was joked about at the beginning, but now people take it more seriously. Politicians - they know they've got to get the women.

But I think there should be more women in Parliament, left wing people advocating women's rights. There's still very few speaking for women. I mean, when there's anything in Parliament about abortion, we've always got the men speaking for us. And what do you want a bloody old man for as Director of Social Services? He doesn't even reply when you write to him about battered wives.

I spread Women's Lib ideas wherever I am, in the launderette, the doctor's waiting room, I talk to everybody, anybody. For instance, you talk to women about their jobs. You say, 'Oh, I bet that's well paid.' They say, 'What' and then they tell you all about it. Then you say, 'Isn't it disgusting, why don't you form a union, and what about equal pay for men and women.' You'd be surprised where you can bring it in. Even when I was in hospital, not the ideal spot, I was reading *The Female Eunuch*. The old doc said to me, 'Ooo, what are you reading that for?' and I said 'You should bloody well read that.' I told all the girls in the ward about it. Spread the gospel. Each person has to try and do their best wherever you are - especially in the job you're in ●



Lucy at the E.1. festival in London, 1974

During the past three years there has been a big increase in the number of women's self help health groups. These groups practice such things as self examination, carry out pregnancy testing and investigate local policies on abortion, sterilisation and other aspects of women's health care.

Nancy MacKeith compiled a short list of groups; for more groups in other areas contact her c/o Spare Rib.

SELF HELP GROUPS

Notes by a member of a women's health group.

The sense of excited discovery that we felt in self-examination was more important than the price of a speculum: we have inhibitions about our bodies, the first time you look at your own vagina in a group you feel shy and the gradual losing of our inhibitions is an exhilarating process.

We think too that the feelings of trust and warmth that develop between women in a self examination group are fundamental, you get to know other women's bodies as well as your own, so that although there is no actual harm in starting alone, we feel that the group process is a very positive one.

We think that the first self-examination should be about getting to know what your vaginas and cervixes look like rather than to establish the presence or absence of an infection. In the women's movement we demand the control of our own bodies - self-examination is about understanding our potential for health, while most doctors are taught to concern themselves only with disease.

Bristol Women's Health Group,
c/o Bristol Women's Centre,
11 Waverley Road,
Redlands,
Bristol.
This group does pregnancy testing.

Edinburgh Health Group,
c/o 31 Royal Terrace,
Edinburgh.
A good place to contact for women wanting information on groups in Scotland.

Health Collective of AWARE,
c/o 14 Radnor Terrace,
London SE8
The AWARE group are doing research projects into doctors attitudes and women's experiences of them, and carrying out self examination.

Sheffield Health Group,
c/o 8 Brungreave Bank,
Sheffield 4.
This Sheffield group organised the women and health conference in October.

Cambridge Pregnancy Advisory Group,
c/o 48 Eden Street,
Cambridge.
or, 25 Alpha Road,
Cambridge.
A mixed group which does pregnancy testing and referral, and has written a booklet on abortion.

Leeds Health Group,
4 Helton Road,
Leeds 8
This Leeds group does self examination, is running a WEA course on women and health, and writing a pregnancy handbook.

Self Health Clinic,
507 Caledonian Road,
London N7.
A mixed group concerned with diet, group therapy etc.

Swansea Women's Health Group,
178 Hanover Street,
Swansea.
or, 18 Windsor Street,
Swansea.

Cardiff Women's Health Group,
c/o 41 Conway Road,
Canton,
Cardiff.
The group has written a handbook on contraception and abortion

Essex Road Women's Centre,
108 Essex Road,
London N1
Local health groups can be contacted through the centre.

Manchester Women's Group,
c/o 8 Lynwood Avenue,
Manchester 16

Angela Kilmartin,
22 Gerrard Road,
London N1.
Angela Kilmartin who organised the U & I cystitis club is organising self-help sessions for women. For further information ring London: 359 0403 Brighton and Shoreham: 2950, Manchester: 4857169, Newcastle: 654428, York: 798060, Canterbury: West Malling 842497, Glasgow: Helensborough 6869, Bristol (provisional) 779831.

Finchley Women's Group,
c/o 16 Church Crescent,
London N3
The group have run a course on women and their bodies.

Oxford Women's Health Group,
c/o 44 Princes Street,
Oxford.
Interested in pelvic inflammatory disease.

What happened at Heywood



The SEI factory in Heywood is one of many small factories which are subsidiaries of General Electrics, the GEC-AEI empire.

There are many more women than men in the factory. They do complicated work requiring intense, precise concentration. The production of the factory relies on the women's work.

The women, in revolt against the humiliation of low wages, inspired by the equal pay demand, provoked by the increasing cost of living, went on strike for eleven weeks.

The strike failed. The women were let down by the men working alongside them, their union was ineffective, the wider support necessary was not organised in time.

Marsha Rowe talked with the women at SEI just before the strike ended.

Photo John Sturrock (Report)



unmarried mothers or whose husbands had left them. No one received any S.S. benefit whatsoever. Strike pay was £6.25. 'My rent is £6.99.'

So was the rent of another woman, whose husband was working at the factory. SEI, 'It's a woman's place, this' employs 200 men. The men continued working during the strike. She said rather flatly how could she pay the rent if she and her husband split up.

Relations between women and women, and women and men, within the family.

There was a grim understanding developing about the men. 'I've always wanted to be on strike. I was picketing for my husband and he was off to the football. It learns you a lot of things.'

'In our job we use ice, and when the men came out we refused to use it, even if it came through the pickets. But the men here, you know, they are getting stuff out so they must be using it.'

Some of the blokes will have been ironic, 'When I came out tonight Brian sang *Onward Christian Soldiers*', without menacing the women's resistance. And the women will be kind and sympathetic, 'It's hard on the husbands, they get fed up', and not adverse to knocking them back, 'He said so you've done in here today love. I said, *Yeah*. A quick Hoover and a dust and it looks a lot different when you haven't done it for a bit.' Everyone laughed. There is too the grinding responsibilities of married women, the learned distrust. A woman with soft, haggard eyes couldn't attend the rally on Saturday afternoon, October 19, which was organised by the Manchester Working Women's Charter Group to extend awareness of the strike, 'Get my old man around the supermarket and he will be bringing home I don't know what.'

Understanding was deepening between women in the same family. After meeting a woman whose young daughter, she announced, worked in the same room at SEI as she did, I recognised them both when they sat together on a bench at the rally. 'Although you do the same work as the women, you get less pay when you're 16. It doesn't go up til you're 18.' Her flat rate is not quite £10. Another had said, 'My daughter's 15 and she wasn't very interested in the strike. She came down to the picket line to see me. *Oh, mum*, she said, *it's awful you shouting at those women going in*. I talked to her about how it concerned her, her future.'

Relations between women and women, and women and men, within the factory.

Quite conscious is a blank anger towards enemies within the factory. On Saturday morning, after there'd been a few trips downstairs to the toilet, it was my turn to go there to wash the tea cups. The key wouldn't go in. The previous day the door hadn't shut at all. It was only that morning it kept on being closed mysteriously. 'Big . . .' as he was called, had stuffed the lock with paper. 'Nasty.' 'That's what they're like.'

In desperation that the strike could not be successful if the men did not come out, at the beginning of October the women occupied the factory, sneaking past the security guards to take over the switchboard and the reception office. 'We put a chain and a padlock, and barbed wire, on the back gate to lock the men in', said Pat McMahon who'd helped to chat up the security guards to divert their attention. '£3 for a padlock for half an hour', said Bella Fullard drily. The

men cut it through at 5.20pm, the end of the day shift. Bella was the leader of the strike. She's worked at SEI for 24 years, returning a few years after each of her three daughters was born, and she was exhausted to the point of dropping her head onto the desk and falling asleep amidst our chatter. All the women were tired.

'My nerves are gone, can't sleep and you're turning over and over. It's on your mind all the time. Last week I thought I'm not going this morning and I said I wasn't, and I cried all morning. I kept wondering who was at the picket line. Though it was hard when the others broke.'

After a strike meeting two weeks before, 24 women returned to work. Bored by calling out 'scabs' on Friday evening, when the 5.25 to 9pm shift started, the picketing women sang out, 'Dah di dah, dah di dah' - a Laurel and Hardy ditty - to the women who dwindled in groups down the lane into the factory, carefully keeping their faces turned away under their umbrellas.

Some of those who went back were said to be new workers. Towards a couple of them there was bitterness, 'She was a spy on the committee. We worked it out, how our plans were getting back.' And an old recognition that any woman whose husband was connected to management was going to be loyal to him and not to the women she worked with.

Jostling came up sometimes, 'No agro like, all in fun.'

'Nothing personal to you, but I have gone back to work.'

'Mightn't be personal to you, but I take it bloody personal.'

They enjoyed poking at the arrogance of men who escorted the scabs. 'The Production Manager used to come out for his cigar. We used to slow clap him. Then we went right up close. He doesn't come out anymore.'

Fears threatened their toughness - worry about how long the striking women could keep it up, and about victimisation when they returned to work. 'I heard some of them talking outside the wages room yesterday. I think they are getting a bit tired and frightened.' The women had to be brave to carry on - no one expected the strike to last so long. In the other Salford factory not far away at Eccles, the women workers had ignored three appeals from AEUW - the union to which they belong - to down tools in support of the women at Heywood. This, despite the fact they would also benefit from any of the gains they refused to help achieve.

Relations between the women and their work and rates of pay.

The work is graded as light engineering. There is a basic wage each week. The women's basic is £18.25 which is lower than the men's.

'Down the yard there's a press shop and women working next to the men and not paid the same as the men.'

'They are taking women off some jobs and putting men on and they get more money. We don't know how much.'

'I've never seen a man do my job. I don't think men would have the patience.'

Considering the way the women are paid for their work, they have to reach through skin-crawling obstacles towards each other to strike together in the first place. On top of the basic rate, there's a bribe. The official word for it is a bonus rate. The bonus rate differs, according to sex and according to the job - it's a jungle of private incentives. The maximum bonus for the women could not be more than 85% - the men's ▀

'When we go back we'll find out who our friends are. We are thought very militant, me and you. We are called the ring leaders in our room.'

'This is making me militant.'

The four hundred women at Salford Electrical Instruments factory stayed out on strike for equal pay for eleven weeks, from August to October this year. The factory's in Heywood, a 12p bus ride from Manchester, the fare being cheaper outside of peak hours.

The two women quoted above are unusual in that they knew each other well before the strike.

'You go in to get your work done, but you don't know someone down the room, until this.'

'We feel more together since the strike, don't we.'

Both women were brought up by their fathers.

'My mother went off to London when I was 12. It's funny how things stick with you. I remember my dad filling the tub with water, with all the clothes in it, and a little primus underneath, and the rubbing board.'

The Claimants Union went down to Social Security office with nine of the women in Rochester, the next town, who were either



Photo taken through the window into the switchboard office of SEI the night after the occupation of the factory. Security guards had sealed off the factory doors and would not allow anyone in.

can be as much as 150%.

Women are timed against each other and against the clock. 'Over us there are the supervisors - they're out - and over them are the charge hands. The charge hands aren't out. They come round with a clock which they put in front of you. They say *This will help you get it done faster..* You have one eye on your work and one eye on the clock. They come back and say, *Oh, six minutes, that's good.*'

'There is too many bosses.'

'There is always too many bosses. The supervisor will tell me to do one thing, then the charge hand will come around and she will say the supervisor isn't right and then the charge hand will come back and say the same thing.'

'Sometimes when you're working you think what are you doing here.'

Both men and women also receive threshold payments, the cost of living increase begun under the Tory Phase 3 legislation. Neither the men nor the women are getting anything like the £4 announced by the government in the middle of October. Before the strike the threshold payments to the women was £1.60.

After the skilled men took successful action inside the factory in April/May this year, the AEUW proceeded with the women's claims for equal pay in July. 'We were working on go slow and the management came round and said do we want to work normal, and we said, *What do you mean?* He said, back to bonus work or we would not get paid from 8 o'clock this morning. So we walked out and then rang the union.'

Management offered to settle in October by according the women equal bonus rates with the semi-skilled men only; no increase in the basic

rate; an increase of 80p in the threshold but with no further payment. The evening shift, which is all women, was to be extended from 20 hours to 21 hours so the workers would qualify for redundancy pay. The night shift from 9pm until morning is worked by men. The factory never stops for seven days and seven nights a week

Relations between the women and the officials and the betrayal of power.

Normally unnoticeable things in the relations between people became later obviously grotesque. Peter Bramah is the AEUW district secretary. At Saturday's rally he spoke first and in detail about SEI: At Eccles, 'Those in cahoots with employers were holding meetings in pubs telling lies about threats or offers to intimidate the women', and 'There was a determination on the part of employers to squash trade unionism inside the factory.' Bella Fullard stood up next, 'Peter had not left me much to say, has he girls, except to thank everyone who has showed support . . .' My heart sank as the applause quietened and as I recorded her words in my notebook.

The trade union official pledges his support. He speaks *on behalf* of the women. To the audience this arrangement was acceptable - concealing the way officials are just a little too far off from the actual strike experience, just that much above and on top of the women, and therefore how their seemingly helpful attitude in fact provokes pessimism. If Bella had been allowed to give the history of the strike the women's pride in what they had struggled through would have become visible, and strengthening. Instead of Peter Bramah saying, 'I have learned about talking to



women in a collective way', the rally would have been able to talk about why the men had not come out in support of the women, to understand the strains on the women, the immediacy of the need to take practical action to force the men out there and then. Peter Bramah might have begun to realise you don't talk *to* people in a collective way, you talk *with* them.

That morning two men had appeared in the switchboard room. One hovered about the door, the other walked in past the sign a woman had put up, 'When the floor's are full, please use the ashtrays.' He turned out to be the local Labour MP, Jo Barnet, who'd been in touch with Michael Foot. 'Well, it can be taken up with the Department of Employment, they will ask an Inspector.'

'What will that achieve?'

'It can be looked into. There's the Arbitration Court. The strike has not been successful, has it.'

After he'd left, none of us could quite remember what the message about Michael Foot for the strike committee was supposed to be.

Peter Bramah squashed the women's struggle



Photo John Sturrock (Report)

After a strike meeting on October 8, some of the women return to work.

for equal wages two days later. He negotiated for the women at SEI to return to work - the AEUW recommended the women accept the meagre terms of the management's offer.

The rally had been earnestly keen to carry through plans for an AEUW one day strike in the Bury district the following Monday week to force the issue at SEI. 'We thought the film *Blow for Blow* was wrong about the union officials when we saw it. But it was right. They've sold us down the river.'

In the wooden ambulance hall where the strikers had organised a creche, I.S. gave a free screening of *Blow for Blow*, the film about the French women's strike. The film's effect was moving and some bits of it were puzzling. On first name terms with the police who'd been dropping in for cups of tea, the women didn't think they had to worry about them as the French women had. But they heard Cathy Clarke of Liverpool the following day describe the way 50 police were organised to escort 50 scabs through the gates at the successful women's strike at Wingrove and Rogers for equal pay earlier this year.

Relations between the women, towards and between themselves, their work and the outside world.

If the ending of the strike has shaken loose some of these attitudes, the days spent occupying the factory and the nights wrapped in blankets, have allowed for an exchange and sharing of the experience of working at SEI. While only individually experienced, the resolution of a revolt takes an uneasy, lonely path into thicker tangles:

'When I first came to SEI I was doing crystals. For six months the machine kept splashing me in the face. The foreman got a new bit put in but it didn't get any better. They look after the men's jobs more. The women wouldn't say anything. They didn't think I'd stick up for myself. He said I was only making trouble. So I went to Personnel and asked for a transfer. The foreman said, *I'll give you a transfer*, and he takes me to the other room where his mate is. They get over you and push you round. Mind you, they don't push the men around. It's a woman - Personnel - she's nice. She's not out, she's management. So I

moved upstairs. You can make a better bonus on crystals, I got up to 160. The best I ever made on soldering is 60. If you do something wrong on crystals you can get a new one - you just carry on - but on soldering you have to strip it all down and start again. I lost £5 a week through moving.'

She wanted to do karate like her husband, but he reckoned she was too soft. Previously she had worked at a wall paper factory - another big employer of women round there - and stuck it out for half a day. She described women who could only see themselves from outside themselves. Because the women are constantly an object for others they define themselves by the expectations of others, they are caged by the other's view of them:

'It was awful. You had to grab the paper out and it was burning my hands all the time. I said to one girl what are you working like this for? There's no bonus there. She said they had to get this lot finished. She repeated it. They don't realise that as soon as they get one lot finished, then they had another to do. The more they do the more they've got to do.'



Photo John Sturrock (Report)

The women at SEI in the hall, which is between the reception office and the switchboard room, a week after they first occupied the factory.

Women are emotionally committed to working long and hard for others. Women's feelings towards loving and women's feelings towards authority are connected, yet this connexion is elusive because it is so deep. Its surfacing is hesitant and painful. A way of making the complicated feelings provoked less threatening is to express them as absurd. The reactions of men at home to the strike were discussed amongst the women as a joke: 'I called him a male chauvinist pig last night while he was watching the telly. He said he didn't want me to go to any more meetings.' It's complicated for, after all, 'The men were out for nearly six weeks early this year and they lost £100 in wages.'

While laughter prevents the feelings becoming overwhelming, it also delays a public understanding of the connexions. The equal pay demand has torn away at the edges of women's martyrdom at work. Their fears inside can be turned over, the anger incorporated can be directed outside. Yet the process is slow. The women at SEI have been submitting to abysmal working conditions:

'They are at you and at you to get a bit more out of you. I've been here for 12 years. I was working evening shifts because of the kids. Lots of women do. He (management) mythered me until I agreed to work days instead. Mythered? That means pestered. I'd said I'd work til 4pm. He carried on about how they needed more help until I agreed

eventually to work til 5.20. I said you'd never get me here in the morning til 9 o'clock, what with getting the kids off to school, but here I am now starting at 8am like the rest.'

Not only can the management wangle more hours spent at work by the women, they can re-time the jobs within the factory. An improvement in the efficiency of machinery means an improvement for SEI, not for the women who work the machines.

'If there's anything different in the job they get the rate fixer in. Last time on mounting they cut something out. They altered the jigs. The rate fixer is in APEX. She timed this girl who was faster than the others, so now they can't make even 85%. For ordinary Timing you might be allowed 1 hour 45 minutes for 100 - that's not a bad time. You have to fill out your bonus book and your ticket once a day. Your job number and quantity is on the job ticket. They have it all weighed up. It's all down in the office. They have a list. If your average goes up and down, if you're feeling a bit tired one day, it's in their books.'

Not content with this tortuous way of extracting fast work from the women, competence and efficiency are exploited by the management. The women's skill backfires on themselves:

'The thing is, I get moved about because I'm good. And you forget, when you haven't done a job for a bit, like welding, you lose your speed. The others on it all the time were making £3

bonus and I was only making 12s.'

'What sort of work? Well, in our room there are loads and loads of jobs: etching, orientation, about eight I think, and they're all together.

What's finished gets passed on. There's a lot of assembly. For base and cage assembly, you have to tin the wires, then cut them, thread them on the markers, weld them, trim them off, take the bases to be cleaned, then crank them on a machine, the machine bends the wires, thread them through the cage assemblies, weld them on, trim them off and then you take them down to inspection. The finest wire is .6 millimetres. If you are not careful, you bend it, then it's no use.'

'I do coil winding - it's for telephones - a man couldn't do it, he would not have the patience.'

'I was burning myself soldering. I had marks right up my arm.'

'I used to work at Mutual Mills. My friend lost her thumb there last week.'

'My friend lost the top of her fingers. She's at Middleton. She's a dress cutter.'

'Remember little Maureen here, when the wire snapped and got her in the eye.'

'Have you seen *Shoulder to Shoulder*? It's just finished on the telly here. Which side have you joined up with? Your women's lib membership? I think if I lived in the time, I would have gone with Sylvia because she's for the working women' ●

NEWS

WHAT HAPPENS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION ?

Children in schools for the severely subnormal have been assigned for one reason or another to the very lowest end of the educational system. In the main they are regarded as fixed in the categories to which they have been allocated: they are brain damaged, genetically inferior, 'born evil'.

Over 90% of teachers in subnormality schools are women. How do they define their role? Is there a relationship between their role as teachers and their position as women? Are the teachers themselves conscious of such a relationship?

Roberta Henderson and Liz Cooper are members of an informal group which organised a teach-in on the role of the teacher in special education in London at the end of September. Here they explore that discussion and suggest ways in which caring roles can be seen in terms of power relations.

Children assessed as having IQ scores of less than 50, severe physical handicap, or very disturbed behaviour are normally assigned to schools for the severely subnormal (ESN(S)). Prior to the 1970 Education (Handicapped) Act these schools were known as Junior Training Centres and came under the Department of Health: they were concerned with training rather than education.

The 1970 Act defined all children as educable for the first time and thus the training centres are now schools run by the department of Education and staffed increasingly by trained teachers. All such schools in London, Outer London and counties in South East England were leafleted for the teach-in, which was attended by over 100 people, 95% of them women.

The meeting was structured very informally. Morning workshops centred around video film of teachers in the classrooms of special schools. The video films were intended to assist discussion and we hoped that from these workshops general issues would be raised for more specific discussion in the afternoon. When we met for the first general meeting at the end of the morning, there were no clear indications in the reports from the

workshops that any one issue was going to dominate the conference. This may have been due to the fact that different films were shown to the different groups and that we had not attempted to impose any direction on the teach-in at that stage (for example no papers were presented).

After some discussion and prompting from the organisers six topics for the workshops were finally agreed to. Interest was varied. Mild amusement was the response to the workshop that we suggested on Women in Special Education. It was followed by the suggestion that we should have one on men as there were so few of them there. In fact, no one went to this workshop, although it was retitled Men/Women in Special Education. There was, therefore, no explicit discussion of this issue, although there were scattered comments throughout the day.

Social Acceptability

The teachers who attended the meeting were concerned in their professional lives with teaching children who have been assigned for one reason or another to the very lowest end of the educational system. In the main these children are regarded as fixed in the categories to which they have been allocated; they are brain damaged, genetically inferior, 'born evil' (and we

quote). The criteria of success as used in normal schools such as C.S.E., O level and A level results - obviously do not apply. Teachers tend to concentrate instead on teaching the child to be socially acceptable and to reach his or her 'full potential' whatever that might mean.

It was clear at the teach-in that social acceptability was very much at the forefront of the teachers' minds; several teachers suggested that a child who was socially acceptable was (a) happier and (b) going to get on better. An attempt was made to discuss the difference between social acceptability and social competence; that to teach social competence requires examining the situation from the child's point of view; to ask the question what did he or she need to learn to be more competent in, rather than more acceptable to, society? Whereas to concentrate on social acceptability is to teach ways of behaving that conform with the teachers' view of what is 'good' behaviour. Although a child may sometimes become more independent in the process of learning to be more 'acceptable' we think this is looking at the situation the wrong way round.

We (the organizers) suggested that the values implicit in the teachers' idea of social acceptability were not necessarily values that all sections of

society would agree to. This produced considerable hostility in such comments as 'Why don't you go and teach these kids and see for yourselves?'; 'Would you let your twelve-year-old daughter travel on a bus with subnormal male adolescents?'; 'If you had ever seen a child evacuate his bowels and then eat it...' etc.

Blaming the Victim

There was considerable interest in the practical aspects of teaching in E.S.N.(S) Schools and one teacher suggested a workshop on what teachers are in fact doing in the classroom and why. There was a strong response to this suggestion and it was the best attended workshop under the title 'What? and Why?' Here they discussed their own problems and confusions within the school; for example the re-organization of classrooms into subject or purpose rooms, rather than 'teacher' rooms. A further point was that teachers clearly feel a need for information, knowledge and expert help, and there is little available. The lack of co-ordination between teachers, parents, social workers and others involved in the care of children was brought up, as part of the problems of 'What? and Why?' There was no discussion of problems in terms of relations between people. There was no discussion in

this or any other workshop of the basic relations between teacher and child in the classroom.

We showed film of specific situations, and it was difficult to get the workshops to discuss these films as *examples* of teaching severely subnormal children rather than as instances of the particular characteristics of the teacher and child who happened to be on the film. One teacher (a man) ridiculed the films as being useless as they were out of date (filmed last year) and things weren't like that in his school. In another workshop the headmaster (a man) pointed out repeatedly that the child on film (whom he knew personally) was very peculiar, unusually difficult and an extreme case, thus making generalizations difficult. Many comments included the phrase 'the teacher's personality' as the basic explanation for differences between ways of doing things and this seemed to be a sufficient explanation. It came across quite forcefully that although teachers realized that all sorts of variables are involved in predicting the outcome of the total educational experience for a severely subnormal child - social factors, class, type of parent, teacher, school organization, etc, they also thought the main factor is the limitation of the individual child. In other words it is his or her hole in the head, genetic abnormality, or psychopathic personality that the teacher has to struggle with. We think this unconscious individualizing, or perhaps even victimizing has implications for women in general as it is women who carry out these roles in the classroom.

Caring for people

What stood out for us at the teach-in was a definite lack of interest, lack of consciousness perhaps in the role of women as women in teaching.

The majority of teachers in infant and junior schools and in special education are women; at the 'lower' ends, in terms of status and pay, women also predominate in other 'people' professions like social work and nursing, and the caring role is clearly seen to be the one most suited to women's abilities. Presumably this follows from the role of mother which is considered to be both the natural function of a woman, and is basically concerned with care. Women are educated to accept the central importance of their mother function and if not entirely directed into this role are heavily discouraged from doing anything else that is not also a caring, helping, 'people' oriented job.

As mothers or 'expectant' mothers, women's lives are invested in those of their children; they become responsible for other people and, once actual wives or mothers, take on the caring role. The 'people' professions are institutionalized forms of this

and it is understandable therefore that women go into these professions in large numbers. These jobs are low status in the hierarchy of professions as exemplified by the depressed rates of pay, and they are seen as 'vocations'. To be a mother is a 'vocation' and thus women accept jobs with low status and pay almost as an inalienable function of being a woman. This may explain why so many women in teaching are at the lower end of the profession, for in higher education men teachers predominate.

Although neither in the hierarchy of professions does teaching have power as it is low status, nor within teaching do women teachers have much power as they are largely not the decision makers - they do have power over the children they teach. There is very little recognition of this fact by women in these roles. The very idea of caring roles being seen in terms of power relations is rejected by the 'people' professions as a whole. But by taking on the care of a person or parts of a person, whether physical comfort, or educational development or whatever, a dependence is created in the one being cared for. This dependence allows the 'carer' to manipulate the behaviour and context of the dependent person. The caring person can for example refuse to satisfy the needs of the dependent person whether they be emotional, sexual, physical or educational, who may then be forced to alter his or her behaviour to achieve the satisfaction of his or her needs. The caring person has access to information about the dependent person which is not reciprocal - this means that caring roles must contain a considerable amount of power. Non-reciprocal use of information is power.

The power that women exert over children is partly a function of the greater power exerted by men over women in a hierarchy in which men are at the top, women in the middle and children at the bottom. This structure is legitimized by the idea that women are fulfilling their 'natural function' in being dominated by men and in turn dominating children 'for their own good'. In teaching, it seems to us women do not recognize the power they have, or the effect of this power over children, however relative it is in the total power structure. It may be simplistic to suggest that that is because they are not feminists, but it seems to us that one of the main effects of becoming a feminist is to be aware of power and the relationship between different parts of the power structure. As feminists they could not only reject their low status within the schools, but simultaneously their caring role as primary, or essential. As it is, by not recognizing their power, women teachers collude with an educational system which sets out to inculcate existing values, and to eradicate the possi-

bility of social change.

Teachers in special education do not seem to us to understand the contradictory aspects of what they are doing. The child is on the one hand encouraged, taught to be normal and punished for abnormalities (like stripping in the street) - yet at the same time it is made clear to him or her (and it is clear to the teacher) that he or she will never be normal ('born evil'). Normality and subnormality are used in contradiction and the child is helpless. The situation is one of complete double bind.

Women as teachers

We see very important differences in the way in which mothers and teachers are more or less trapped in the situation. It is possible for teachers to leave their jobs, change the structure of the teaching situation, alter their power relations within teaching. It is much more difficult for the mother in the family to make any kind of change at all.

She cannot for example abandon her children without providing alternative means of care; if she does she will be brought before the courts. It is also much more difficult for her to alter the power relations within the family - the hierarchy being father, mother, child and this hierarchy is sanctioned by the whole of society. How easy is it, for example, for a mother to change the structure of the family when she is politically, economically and socially entirely dependent upon it? Because women in teaching have relative economic freedom they are not so dependent on their role as mothers. It is not, therefore, as inconsistent or as dangerous for them to begin to change relationships between themselves and men, and between themselves and children. Changes have already occurred in the relations *between* women, as they have begun to see themselves as a class, (and to gain more economic independence), in that they are able to understand for example the classic competitiveness between women as a function of their expected role to compete for men. Women *can* alter the nature of relationships once they see what that structure is and what it relies upon, and where they themselves stand.

Our point here is that teachers can do it more easily than mothers. For women to choose teaching as a career is confirmation of their role as mothers. One teacher defended her satisfaction in the job by pointing out that the 'children are yours for life' (meaning hers, for life). What is frightening about teachers in subnormality is that the concept of subnormality is a ready made category for repression and the teachers, in accepting their status as women and all that that means, actually maintain children within that category■

FERTILE

Sir Keith Joseph's Birmingham speech of October 19 shows the clear links between right-wing conservative economic strategies and the suppression of women's demands for the right to control their fertility. It also shows how arguments which attribute the creation of society's worst problems to the individual family and bad parenthood neatly serve to obscure the political and economic choices made in that area of state spending which directly touches the family unit - health, education and welfare benefits.

That part of his speech which attracted most attention stated that women in social classes 4 and 5 were producing one third of all births, and that these women were the least fitted to be mothers because a higher proportion of them were single parents. Plenty has been written since to show that his *figures* are wrong - that the birth rate for those social classes is in fact dropping dramatically, and that it is also dropping for teenage mothers and unmarried mothers. But it is not the figures in the speech that matter so much as the use to which they are being put.

No right for women to choose

"The balance of our population, our human stock, is threatened . . . a high and rising proportion of children are being born to mothers least fitted to bring children into the world and to bring them up . . . yet these mothers, the under-20s in many cases, single parents, from social classes 4 and 5, are now producing a third of all births . . . Yet proposals to extend birth control facilities to these classes of people . . . particularly the young unmarried girls, evoke entirely

LIBERALITY AND TORY MORALITY

understandable moral opposition. Is it not condoning immorality? Yes I suppose it is . . . Yet if we do nothing the nation moves towards degeneration."

*Sir Keith Joseph,
Birmingham,
19th October 1974*

The extension of birth control facilities to all women is one of the aims of the Women's Movement, because it sees the control of women's fertility by women as one of the keys to women's greater control over their own lives. When in office as Secretary for the Social Services, Sir Keith Joseph rejected the proposal to make birth control free on the National Health Service and thereby took a stand against that right. This speech goes further. Despite his claims to value individual freedom and choice he feels he has the right to say which women are best suited to have children, and to take steps to prevent those he deems unfit from having children in the 'national interest'.

Attack on Single Parents

"They are unlikely to be able to give children the stable emotional background, the consistent combination of love and firmness which are more important than riches. They are producing problem children, the future denizens of our borstals, subnormal establishments, prisons, hostels for drifters".

As important as the denial of women's right to control their fertility is his attack on single parents. Gingerbread, the pressure group for one-parent families, speaking for single parents who had contacted it after Sir Keith Joseph's speech, expressed the dismay which they felt at being blamed as the producers of society's problems. Single parent families are now one in five of all families in England and Wales. Their increasing numbers point to the irrelevance of assuming that the traditional family must always be the only viable basis for bringing up children.

Instead of castigating them for being unsuitable parents it is essential to take their needs more seriously. In particular there is a desperate lack of day care facilities. If more were provided this would relieve not only single parents but all parents with small children including the increasing numbers of women who

find the isolation of the home overwhelming and the increasing numbers of married women who go out to work.

Attack on the Left

"Real incomes per head have risen beyond what anyone dreamed of a generation back; so have education budgets and welfare budgets; so also have delinquency, truancy, vandalism, hooliganism, illiteracy, decline in educational standards."

The comments on birth control and on single parents must be seen in the context of the rest of the speech. In this Sir Keith attacks the policies of the left - the extension of nationalisation, state education, the National Health Service, pensions, public housing because, he says, they undermine the traditional family and create in so doing the major problems of society.

Behind the arguments about vandalism lies a whole definition of what the spending priorities should be for the state. For socialists the major evils of society are not those that Sir Keith points to, but precisely the lack of adequate housing, schools, hospitals, educational facilities, medical provision; and the lack of democratic control of these facilities.

To suggest, as Sir Keith Joseph does, that it is the increase in spending on the social services since the war which has created the problems he identifies, is to ignore the obvious alternative. Spending in those years in real terms has not kept pace with the rising costs of running and developing the services, with the result that schools, hospitals and housing are in crisis. This is a situation which any cutback in spending will aggravate still further.

Back to the Thirties?

"Parents are being divested of their duty to provide for their family economically, of their responsibility for education, health . . . saving for old age, for housing . . . But the only lasting help we can give the poor is to help themselves. To do the opposite is to create more dependence . . . while throwing an unfair burden on society."

The implications of Sir Keith's general approach is a complete rejection of the welfare state. The

Beveridge Report, which formed the basis of the Social Services set up after the Second World War, drew on the evidence of the Rowntree Report - a study of poverty in York in the 1930s.

This found that 31% of the working class (17.8% of the population) were living below what he called a 'human needs' level where health is permanently impaired by poor diet. The major causes of poverty were low wages and unemployment. Beveridge concluded that, together with full employment, family and child allowances as well as adequate unemployment benefits and medical provision were essential to cushion the effects of the market on the worst paid. The financing of provision was to be via a social insurance system which effectively redistributed income between the better and less well paid, thereby making universal provision available as a right to all those who needed it.

Sir Keith focuses only on the rise in real incomes and the rise in welfare spending since the Second World War, but he ignores the fact that the differentials between rich and poor remain and that in a period of inflation and threatened recession the needs of those not in work and of those whose incomes are being outstripped by rising prices must be taken seriously. There is no possibility of beginning to do this if the basis of Beveridge is abandoned.

Creeping Selectivity

Universal provision of welfare benefits as a right has been steadily eroded since the Second World War. It has been replaced with more and more selective provision and means-tested benefits, at the same time as insufficient finance for medicine, education and housing has deprived many families of the most obvious necessities. This is clear in the case of the imposition of prescription charges, charges for dental care and spectacles; means-testing for school meals, maternity foods and rent and rate rebates; as well as longer hospital waiting lists, housing lists, and schools on half time. Given this it seems far more likely that the demoralisation of the poor to which Sir Keith refers comes not from benefits and provision themselves, but from the very methods he advocates - selectivity and greater concentration on the private sector.

A denial of the role women actually play

Since the war there has been a growth in independence for women. Many more unmarried women in all classes are choosing to keep their

babies instead of handing them over to adoption agencies. Many women in miserable marriages have had the confidence to get out. Women's employment has vastly increased so that now 1 in 3 of women work. Women are beginning to take more part in union organisation, to fight for equal pay and to be much more assertive in politics outside work.

Throughout Sir Keith Joseph's speech women are mentioned only in terms of motherhood and families. He thereby limits the definition of their role in society to traditional terms which bear little or no relationship to reality. For women this represents an attempt to abolish this upsurge in independent activity and all growth towards further control of their lives.

But this attack remains covert - probably for many people reading the speech, and even for many women whose experience it denies, it goes unnoticed - so deeply entrenched are the conventional ideas of the irrelevance of women to public life.

Women as pawns in the attack on social classes 4 & 5

The direct attack, though, is on women in social classes 4 and 5. This serves two purposes. It is a crude attempt to divert attention away from crucial choices about state spending on the social services on to convenient scapegoats. Secondly, if it succeeded it could be a way of turning all better-paid workers against the poorest sections of the working class.

The Tories are faced with both economic and political problems when they advocate making massive cuts in public expenditure. But the political problems can be eased if those who are hit hardest by the cuts lose the sympathy of those who at a particular moment are more fortunate.

In arguing that the blame should be placed on families, and that women in particular should pay the price by being told not to have children, Sir Keith seeks to perpetuate the myth that individual families alone can and should fight the major economic developments of the British and the world economy. It therefore becomes their sole fault if they fail.

Women are both the queens and the pawns in this tactic. They are pawns in that their interests are in no way considered. They are queens in that if women and men can be persuaded that these problems really are their fault, then Sir Keith and others who would advocate the same measures will be a crucial step nearer to succeeding.

Rachel Chant

RAPE PROTEST



Lyn Hutton-Williams

Two of the six women arrested on charges of obstruction outside the US Embassy in London on October 21 in protest against the sentencing of rape victim Inez Garcia to five years imprisonment for second degree murder (Spare Rib 30). The trials of two of the six, which were due to take place on October 21 at Marlborough Street Magistrates' Court, have now been postponed to January and August 1975.

Married women student's grant increase

The married woman student's grant has been raised to equal that of students living at home with their parents (£475 p.a.). But her husband will now have to pay a share if he earns enough. Under this new grant regulation working women are equally expected to pay part of their student husband's grant, although the male student is less likely to be affected since his wife is earning on average about half a man's wage. His full grant remains the same as for other students, i.e. £605 p.a.

At a press conference on October 24 John Randall, president of the National Union of Students, spoke of the effect this regulation was already having on students whose husbands would not pay their share towards their wife's grant. The dents, male and female, are at Colleges of Education, so it is the teaching profession that stands to lose most when married students find they can no longer afford to study to become teachers.

Deborah Page, of Rachel MacMillan College, said that eleven women had had to leave the college because their husbands were unable or unwilling to pay towards their grant. Ms MacMillan originally founded a nursery in the 19th century: the place is now a college of education but the nursery still exists to take care of students' children. In these good conditions, only half the 380 full time and 200 part time students are married women (many with children); all are angry at becoming suddenly dependent on their husbands and few know what to do about it.

The NUS wants to abolish means-tested grants altogether, so that all students would receive a full grant from their Local Education Authority, without being dependent on contributions from husband, wife or parents. The extra expense of this could be nearly cancelled out by swinging income tax increases on the rich, said John Randall, plus the abolition of tax concessions now enjoyed by the parents of students.

At present, a student whose parents refuse to pay their share of her/his grant can work for three years, and will then be classed as independent (and so receive a full grant) if she/he applies again.

Janet Wright

Nursery workers demand a better deal

The Nursery Staff Action Group, whose address is St Peter's Toddler Club, St Peter's Church, Eaton Square, London SW1, reports on a meeting held at the end of October.

Exploitation: The NNEB students in a private residential nursery have asked that the action group not take up their case as they fear victimisation. They work split shifts, a total of 8½ hours, and possibly a couple of late watches per week - 1 a.m. to 9 a.m. For this they are paid £3 per week, plus 80p fares and meals each day at college. They are so frightened of being failed that they are willing to put up with this scandalous exploitation. How many others are there? Surely we are strong enough to fight this sort of thing.

Students & Courses: We had a wide ranging discussion about some of the very repressive rigid policies on courses. Students are failed for "the wrong attitude", when their academic and practical work is

satisfactory. There is no appeals procedure against these subjective assessments and only if a student is really strong is it possible to fight. The student group is split up so that there is no way of all meeting together. Generally, the NNEB students seem very vulnerable to victimisation. The NUS is interested in taking up these issues and some information will be supplied for their use.

Working Women's Charter: Local campaigns around the demand for nursery provision are being organised in several areas, generally under the auspices of the Trades Council. Islington has a very active group of working women, including nursery workers, mothers and women in the women's movement. The focus has been on widening the NALGO official action against agency staff and chronic staff shortages. The 250 parents on the priority waiting list, those already using the nurseries, nursery workers and other trade unionists were invited to a meeting at the end of November. From this meeting, both consumers and workers should be able to move to joint action to press on with demands for a better service for the kids and a better deal for nursery workers. This bond of unity is strength.

The media hurried to Ealing and wrote about the women with a mixture of head patting and back patting under such titles as 'Hand Maidens'. All the familiar phrases appeared; the women were quoted as saying, "We're in no way anti men" and "We're not women's lib" (of course). Their reply: "Would we be doing this if we did not support the liberation of women?"

How did they become aware of the particular problems facing women artists? "Because we are women . . . and by watching our friends; women who make beautiful things and use up all their energy in the process of freeing themselves from the kids for long enough to work systematically. They don't have the time or maybe the push to rush round selling it as well."

The second major difference between this and other galleries is that they sell and exhibit both arts and crafts. The small whitewashed gallery contains painting, macrame, sculpture, embroidery, prints, stained glass, tie-dyed T-shirts, pottery, leatherwork, quilts, jewellery etc. The notion that the fine arts are superior to the crafts is firmly embedded in our culture and it's a significant move to exhibit them as different but equal.

It's very appropriate that a women's gallery should break down the hierarchy of the arts. When no distinction was made between painting, sculpture and the crafts - when art was primarily in the service of religion - men and women were equally employed in such work as embroidery. But as the hierarchy of the arts developed, often insuperable barriers faced women where prestigious, remunerative oil painting was concerned, and their creativity was confined to the less admired, functional, domestic crafts.

Of course, recently crafts have had status and high prices conferred upon them by the art world - but only those crafts which can be appreciated as abstract paintings, and looked at as abstract paintings, e.g. Navaho blankets and American pieced quilts. They are not valued and priced for the meaning they had for their makers or for their place in women's cultural history. At *No Man's Hand*, quilts are hung with pride but not as paintings.

No Man's Hand differs in other ways from West End galleries. Low overheads enable the women to keep their mark up low, and the commission they take on sales is correspondingly low. Most West End galleries take 50% commission. And while most galleries sign a contract with their 'stable' of artists preventing them from showing elsewhere, *No Man's Hand* lays no claims and puts no pressures on artists who show with them. Everything is on sale or return.

The gallery has shown both professional artists and makers of one-offs. "Normally to sell you have to

prove you are professional - serious - that you've produced a reasonable amount of work. People don't judge you on three pieces."

Whereas most galleries rely on the art school network to find artists, *No Man's Hand* advertised in *Time Out*: "Women, if you make beautiful things, contact Lillian or Maria." The volume of work that flooded in, and the number of women who asked them to come and see their work, mean that they turn away about 80% of the work they are offered. Some form of selection procedure they believe is "reassuring" for both maker and buyer.

No Man's Hand can be contacted and visited at Spring Bridge Road, London W5 (01-567 0528)■

Rosie Parker

Football as she is played

Curiosity, a desire to see some good football, an active interest in the women's movement - all these motivated me to make the trek to Wimbledon Football Club one damp dark evening in November to watch England beat France 2:0 in the first women's international football match that I had seen.

The ground was small, half empty and the 'big match' tension, often felt at first division men's football, not at all apparent. The majority of the 2,000 spectators were men and the atmosphere very jokey: 'nice one Cynthia'; 'now, now, naughty girl'; 'a couple of them look like women'; 'loosen your brassieres now, girls' were just a few of the remarks I heard coming from the terraces as the game progressed. Sexist jokes and whistles buzzed around the ground. One man in front of me wandered off just before half time muttering, 'I don't agree with women playing football anyway'.

All this I had half expected as it does seem to me that neither men, the media, nor indeed women take women's football very seriously. However it must be said that in spite of the sexist jokes and light-hearted atmosphere every good piece of play, whether by France or England, was cheered and there was vociferous support for any sign of skill or determination. The audience clearly did want to see a good game even though it is probable that most had come along to see the tits and bums.

It was disheartening and depressing to observe that the standard of football was dreadful. Both teams failed to demonstrate the basic footballing skills of control over the ball and accurate passing; both teams appeared to be very confused in mid-field. Shots at goal on each side were few and more often than not lacked any force or direction - kicking generally lacked strength or

accuracy. On the other hand the marking was leech like and there were some good crosses and useful heading of the ball from both England and France. One or two individuals showed speed and balance and everyone ran with determination, putting in an enormous amount of effort. France was particularly adept at using the offside rule. However the score line did not reflect any real differences between the two sides; the second goal was entirely due to an error on the part of the French goalkeeper. Comparisons are invidious but it is impossible not to make comparative assessments with men playing football, when watching women. I would expect, and get, a higher standard of play from any non league men's team.

What was really insulting was the coverage of the match in the next morning's national newspapers. The *Mirror* published a picture of the England 'girls' drinking champagne in the dressing room after the game, with the caption 'Our girls figure it out right'; a few lines followed on the reasons for celebrating in champers after their 'splendid win . . . which extended their vital statistics to eight unbeaten matches'. The *Sun* had an action picture with the caption 'Pat's pow(d)er shot wins it' (!). The *Express* and the *Mail* gave the match less than two inches of coverage each - no pictures and no analyses of the game. The *Telegraph* published the same picture as the *Sun* but restrained itself from sexist captions. By commenting on the competitive aspects of the match it was the one paper to suggest that at least on that level women's football was on a par with men's. I couldn't get *The Times*, but the *Guardian*, with eight inches of description and no criticism, managed to slip in the stupidest comment of the lot in describing one of the players as 'a petite Bardoesque blonde . . . with socks rolled down'.

None of the papers suggested that the football was awful; that the game was disjointed, dismal and boring. I can't help feeling that had it been a men's match the reviewers would have torn the game apart. By not taking women's football seriously the media do little to help women themselves take the game seriously. It must be very difficult to play good football when you are not expected to play good football; when the kind of tension produced by an excited, turned-on, highly expectant crowd (as at a men's match) is dissipated as attention wanders and groups chat together. The highly critical observant comments I have heard from spectators at men's football are not possible when the game is basically regarded as a joke. The papers might as well all resort to the kind of idiot cracks made by the *Sun* and the *Mirror*. I was surprised not to see the headline - French girl boobs again - perhaps it was in *The Times*■.

Liz Cooper

New women's art gallery

Three women recently opened a gallery in Ealing which they call *No Man's Hand* because they only show and sell work by women.

Although women have been allowed a mothering role in the art world as patronesses, muses, gallery owners etc., they have tended to mother male artists rather than other women. Once inside the art world, many share their male counterparts' blind spots and fail to see work by women artists.

I would have liked London's first all-women gallery to have been an artist's co-operative gallery with studio space on the premises, but dreams apart, while artists have to rely on commercial galleries for survival and for exposure of their work, *No Mans Hand* is needed.

This article about profit, which is the last in Jean Gardiner's economics series, is also the most complicated because profit is such a difficult topic. However it is an appropriate one to finish with given all the current talk about profit crisis and the recurrent theme of profit throughout the series.

There are a number of questions concerning profits currently under discussion. Has there been a serious decline in profits? Have state price control and taxation policies eaten into profits? Are profits necessary for investment and technological progress? How does inflation affect profits? Here we attempt to throw some light on the mysterious notion of profit and the issues surrounding it.

Let us start by looking at how profits are calculated. Private companies' profit is usually measured over a year or six months. It represents that part of the income deriving from a company's operations which counts as income for the company's owners, either directly in the form of dividends distributed to shareholders or indirectly in the form of profit retained in the company itself.

To calculate that part of profit referred to as trading profit a company takes the total value of goods or services sold by the company during the period and deducts from that total the cost to the company of producing those goods or services ie wages and salaries, raw materials and fuel, depreciation of machinery and equipment. In addition it deducts rent and interest paid to the company's creditors since these are not profit accruing to the owners of the company in question. In attempting to maximise profit a company will be trying both to expand the value of its sales and reduce its costs, notably the total of wages and salaries since this latter is the major area of costs which the company is able to negotiate or control in any way. It does this by determining

the size of its labour force, its distribution between different occupations and sexes and attempting to establish wage agreements which are binding for a year or even longer periods of time.

In addition to trading profit, companies may receive rent on property owned and other forms of non-trading profit like interest on loans to other companies or government which contribute to total company income.

What form will profit accruing to the company take? It certainly will not just consist of money in the company's coffers or bank balance since this is normally the least lucrative way of amassing income, no return being earned upon it. Instead, part will go to purchasing additional raw materials and other inputs necessary for expanding production so that profits can be enlarged in the next period; part may finance new machinery and equipment; part may be used to acquire ownership of other firms. Alternatively profits can be used to purchase financial assets eg loans or land or property if the return on these appears greater than the return on extending the company's productive capital.

Some of profits will have to be set aside in a liquid form so that it will have cash available for expenses like wages and salaries, for payments of dividends to shareholders and taxes to the state. Profit, however, is not the only source of funds for a company since it may raise additional finance through borrowing, or through issuing new shares on the Stock Exchange, or receive aid from the state eg investment grants. However for reasons that we will come back to it is profit that companies are most anxious to maximise.

Let us now look at the question of whether a serious decline in companies' profits has occurred and the reasons advanced for changes in the share of profits in Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Although it is generally agreed that there was a decline in the share of trading profits in GDP between the early 1960s and early 1970s there is sharp disagreement as to both the explanation and the significance of this. The following represent three of the different explanations put forward.

1. Profits have been squeezed by the coincidence of mounting demands from the working class for a faster growth in living standards and

growing international competition for markets which restricted firms' ability to raise prices.¹

2. Profits have declined because productivity in private industry has not grown rapidly enough to maintain the rate of return on private investment in plant and machinery and to finance the rapidly expanding 'non-productive' state sector.²

3. Profits have declined because of the prolonged stagnation and backwardness of the British economy resulting from the domination of laissez-faire economic policy ie refusal of the state to intervene in mobilising and redirecting resources eg limiting the export of capital, directing capital into industrial investment in place of property development.³

OTHER ARGUMENTS HAVE BEEN PUT FORWARD WHICH QUESTION THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS OBSERVED DECLINE IN THE SHARE OF PROFITS.

1. The decline in the share profits in the 1960s was in fact concentrated in the period 1966 to 1970 and due to cyclical rather than long term factors. Profits were lower during this period because of the slower growth of production and the underutilisation of plant and equipment resulting from deflationary policies pursued by the then Labour Government.⁴

2. The decline in profit, or specifically trading profit, was offset in part by the rise in non-trading profit including rent and interest. Company income as a whole in fact rose considerably more during this period than trading profit. This reflected both the faster growth of financial companies, eg banks and hire purchase companies, relative to industrial and commercial companies and the tendency for industrial and commercial companies themselves to direct profits into financial assets and land instead of productive capital like new plant and equipment.⁵

3. The decline in gross trading profits has been partially offset by a fall in the burden of taxation on profits especially when account is taken also of government subsidies to industry in the form of investment grants. This contrasts with the rise that occurred in taxes paid out of wages and salaries. Thus whilst tax on company profits declined from 26% at the end of the 1950s to 19% at

the end of the 1960s, tax on wages and salaries rose from 11% to 16%.⁶ Between 1967 and 1972 taxes on profits minus subsidies have fallen from 15% to 9% of industrial and commercial companies' income.⁷

4. The decline in profits may also be exaggerated by the treatment of depreciation. Companies have tended to depreciate their plant and machinery more and more rapidly in order to reduce the length of time it takes them to recover the cost of an initial investment and thus reduce its risk. The annual depreciation of a machine is supposed to reflect the decline in its value that occurs during a year as a result of wear and tear and obsolescence. In practice firms generally recover the initial cost of a machine by depreciation long before the machine becomes unprofitable to operate. Thus to the extent that depreciation charges during the 1960s have increasingly exaggerated genuine capital consumption, the decline in the share of profits is actually less than it appears.

Let us now turn to the recent arguments about the effects of inflation and state price controls on profits which have led the current Labour Government to make major concessions to private companies in the recent Budget.

Both the CBI (Confederation of British Industry) and numerous economists have argued that the system of government taxation of profits is unfair to companies in a period of very rapid inflation. In particular they say that the rise in the cost of raw materials and other inputs in use in the production process, ie stock appreciation, must be deducted from profits before assessment for tax. This is based on the following line of reasoning. As explained above profits are calculated by deducting total costs of production from value of sales. Costs of raw materials and other inputs are determined by the prices actually paid when they were purchased. Now if prices are stable, when a firm recovers these costs on sale of its products it will then have sufficient money to repurchase the same quantity of materials etc for the next period. However if input prices are rising it will have to set aside part of its actual profits for replacement of materials etc and therefore the possibility of using profits for expanding opera-



Poster for *Change The World, It Needs It* - Brecht at the Half Moon, London E1.

tions is curtailed. The conclusion drawn that the government should allow for stock appreciation in assessing profits for tax thus appears eminently reasonable.

There are however two sources of mystification in the argument:

1. In fact stock appreciation does not lead to a reduction in real profits in the long term but merely to a lengthening in the period it takes companies to recover their costs. In other words it reduces liquidity and creates a cash-flow problem but does not lower profitability. This is because a firm on selling its products can always set a price sufficient to recover the cost of inputs and make a profit above that. This has been true even in the recent period of price controls, since rises in costs of raw materials etc have been accepted as justification for rises in prices. Thus the only companies that would be likely to suffer from inflation are those that are financially too weak to postpone recovery of operating costs and thus risk going bankrupt in the mean time. Certainly this would not hold for most of the large companies which provide the bulk of investment in the country. They are strong enough to adopt much longer term profit perspectives.

2. The other mystification in the argument is evident from the fact that it is never extended to wage earners. Earnings from employment, inflated in money terms because of rising prices, but static or declining in real terms, have a rising burden of taxation placed upon them. This is also the case where workers have negotiated threshold agreements since even if these enable workers' gross wages to keep pace with inflation the same cannot be said for net wages.

Moreover workers, unlike firms, have no way of recovering rising costs in the future and therefore are much more dependent on current income rising to keep pace.

Yet in the Budget on November 12 Healey conceded to the CBI demands by granting tax relief to companies on stock appreciation. In future companies can deduct the bulk of stock appreciation from profits before tax is assessed. No similar consideration was given to wage earners. The benefit to industry is estimated at £800 million this winter. The Budget also responded to the CBI's demands for an easing of the Price Code even though the most recent report of the Price Commission indicated that price controls have not adversely affected industrial profitability (see *Financial Times* 1.11.74). The Budget measures to ease the Price Code will increase corporate profitability by an estimated £800 million. They include a provision for companies to raise prices to finance part of their investment in plant and equipment enabling companies to be guaranteed recoupment of the cash cost of investments within 5 to 6 years.

Finally let us turn to the reasons why a Labour Government justifies the consideration it shows to profits and why the TUC leadership can welcome a budget such as this. First it is necessary to note the very great political pressure brought to bear by private business, an example of which being the high-powered delegation from food retailers and manufacturers which visited Shirley Williams at the end of October and informed her that unless profits were boosted there would be no new

investment in their industry. Although the Government responded to this by capitulating in the budget there are other possible reactions which are gaining support within the Labour Party. In particular the idea that if the state provides finance for industry it should have a greater say in the way industry disposes of it and especially have guarantees that necessary and technologically progressive investment gets done.

Thus there are currently three different strategies being proposed for state aid to industry, associated with different political positions.

1. That profits should be boosted by reducing taxation and price controls and that the Stock Exchange and financial markets should be encouraged to resume their traditional role of financing industry (CBI).

2. That an investment bank should be set up to make available loans to industry (Harold Lever).

3. That a National Enterprise Board should be established to channel funds to firms which commit themselves to planning agreements through which the state operates some control over the use of funds for economically beneficial investment purposes (Wedgwood Benn).

Private industry clearly prefers high profits to an investment bank because of the dangers of an investment bank being converted at some stage, under political pressure from within the Labour Party, into a National Enterprise Board or, worse, into a justification for nationalisation. The recent Budget reflected an acceptance by the Labour Government of the first two strategies and a postponement of the third. In addition to boosting profits it made available an investment bank worth £1 billion to industry over the next two years. Yet this policy is meeting increasing opposition within the Labour Party and trade unions because of the recognition from experience of the 1960s and 70s that industry has been spending a lower and lower proportion of its profits on the productive investment which they are intended to generate.

Footnotes

1. See Andrew Glyn and Bob Sutcliffe, *British Capitalism, Workers and the Profits Squeeze*, Penguin 1972.

2. See David Yaffee, *Class Struggle and Rate of Profit*, *New Left Review* 80.

3. See *The Cambridge Political Economy Group*, *Britain's Economic Crisis*, *Spokesman Pamphlet No 44*.

4. See John Hughes, *Profit Trends and Price Controls*, *Spokesman Pamphlet No 41*.

5. See John Hughes.

6. Frank Wilkinson, *The Wage-Tax Spiral and Labour Militancy*, in *Do*

Trade Unions Cause Inflation by D. Jackson, H.A. Turner and F. Wilkinson.

Glossary

Depreciation of machinery: charges which a firm includes in its costs of production along with costs of raw materials etc, in principle to allow for wear and tear and obsolescence of machinery; in practice often to recover the cash paid out for the machinery more quickly than the actual decline in the value of the machinery would necessitate. For example, when a firm invests in a factory in a Third World country which is not regarded as politically stable, it will generally expect to depreciate the investment very rapidly, e.g. it may only invest if it can recover the initial costs in the first year and still earn a profit. The same firm operating in Britain might accept a five year depreciation period on the grounds of greater political stability.

Productive capital: investment in raw materials or machinery or other inputs into the production process from which a profit can be earned.

Liquid: a bank balance is the most liquid asset a company can have because it can be immediately used to purchase goods or pay wages. Machinery or land or long term loans are not liquid assets, since there is both a delay and a possible loss in value involved in selling them.

Stock Exchange: any firm which is quoted on the Stock Exchange can sell new shares to the public to raise money but will more readily do so when share prices are high and thus substantial amounts can be raised by selling relatively few shares, than when share prices are depressed as at present.

Gross Domestic Product: the total value of goods and services produced within the country over a period of time (normally a year) from which a money income is derived.

Non-productive: refers to sectors of the economy where labour is not employed directly by private business and where profit is not directly produced. There is however major disagreement about whether or not productive sectors contribute indirectly to profits.

Stagnation: persistent slow growth of the economy.

Backwardness: a low rate of technical advance, commonly associated with stagnation.

Cyclical: factors causing fluctuations every few years rather than a long term rise or fall.

Deflationary policies: policies leading to a reduction of output and employment eg increasing taxation or lowering government spending.

Risk: uncertainty of return on investment.

Capital consumption: decline in the value of machinery arising from wear and gear and obsolescence.

Cash flow: receipt of money by the firm either from sale of products or assets or from borrowing which enables the firm to pay its debts.

Jean Gardiner

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GROUPS

Coventry Women's Liberation - New Members welcome. For meeting place phone 21167 Ext.10 daytime or 462380 evenings

Anyone in Chelmsford interested in forming WL group please contact Margaret Willis, 1 Coppins Close, Chelmsford, Essex. Telephone 53515

Homosexual women and men join SK group. Friendly weekend meetings for Gay people. E London SK group Albany Trust, 18 Corsica Street, N5 1JN

Plymouth Women's Liberation. 286 North Road, West, Plymouth B8279

IS THERE a WL group in the NORTHAMPTON area to join? Alternatively anyone interested in forming a group? Please write Box. No. 312

WL group in Catford London SE6. If you are interested in joining this group please reply to Box no. 313

Compulsive Eaters interested in forming north London self-help group or any other ideas write Box no. 314

Anyone interested in joining a women's liberation consciousness raising group in the Harrow area please phone Anne at 863-2688

Homosexual/Bisexual Women join the Campaign for Homosexual Equality. CHE is your voice - make it louder! Meetings and socials throughout Britain. Send 9 x 4 see to CHE (332), 28 Kennedy St, Manchester 2

BOOKS ETC.

Women's Liberation Workshop. 38 Earham St, London WC1. Huge range of books now available. Send SAE for list.

Women's Liberation Literature or any books. Send SAE for free booklet to H. Rutovitz, 31 Royal Terrace, Edinburgh.

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New Design W.L. Badge 14p (incl. postage). Stop Rape American pamphlet on self-defence for women (illustrated) 26p (incl. postage). From Sisterhood Books, c/o 22 Great Windmill St, London W1.

SAPPHO, the only lesbian feminist magazine in Europe. 40p inc. post BCM/PE-TREL, London, WC1 6XX. Meetings held every Tuesday of each month, 7.30 pm, upstairs room, The Chepstow Pub, Chepstow Place, London, W2, off Truscotts Corner at the intersection Westbourne Grove, 3 Pembridge Villas, opp. Odeon Cinema and Elliotts Shoe Shop. 40p admission for non-subscribers.

Nuclear Testing can mean cancer, damaged babies, and war. The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament fights against all nuclear weapons. Keep in touch by reading Sanity - £1 per year. CND, 14 Grays Inn Rd., London WC1.

Anti-Apartheid News describes what life is like in Vorster's South Africa, carries news of the liberation struggle in South Africa, Rhodesia, Namibia and Portugal's former African colonies, exposes British collaboration with apartheid - and involves you in the fight against it. 10 issues a year. Membership of the Anti-Apartheid Movement (which includes subscription to AA News), £2 pa: subscription only, 75p pa. Anti-Apartheid Movement, 89 Charlotte St., London W1. Tel. 01-580 5211.

Women wishing to buy 1975 Feminist Calendars write to Box no.317.

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PERSONAL

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Fairly confused SE London man would like to meet some liberated women socially 302 3219

Gay women interested in new venture communicate Box no 318

COURSES

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Women at Home can study for interior design diploma through accredited correspondence course. Colour prospectus from Dept. SR, Rhodoc International, School of Design, Rhodoc House, Yelverton, Devon PL20 6DY

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Problems which are usually the subject of private agonisings or confined within a helper/'patient' relationship were discussed at a one-day conference *Women and their Treatment in Psychiatry* (Imperial College, London, October 19) - a meeting of 200 (95% women) teachers, social workers, therapists, counsellors, nurses, psychologists, students.

The range and numbers of issues billed to be included in the conference reflected a basic premise which turned out to be shared by many of those there: that women's problems cannot be seen in isolation from their position in society. The very high incidence of what are thought of as primarily 'women's problems', the statistics of housewives on tranquillisers, the admission rate to mental hospitals and referral rate to psychiatric care, are well recognised in professional circles. What is lacking is a sense that anything could change very significantly beyond an extension of existing forms of help. This attitude is in turn related to the absence of a critical approach to the practice of psychiatry generally, and in particular to the specific strains and conflicts and consequent symptoms involved in being a woman. What do the symptoms represent, what are they symptoms of beyond a purely individual mental or emotional malfunctioning? The limits on looking at this area in the context of the politics of women's role in society, or on challenging orthodox diagnoses and forms of treatment, have seemed, until now, to be fairly absolute.

The achievement of the conference was not simply a recognition of the extent and scale of women's psychological and somatic problems - and, very importantly, the relationship between them - but a sense of commitment by women both to defining and altering the causative situation, and to exploring alternative treatments.

After an initial plenary meeting, the conference split into sessions: a choice of three in the morning and another three after lunch. It was frustrating to have to choose between *Women and Alcohol*, *Women and Crisis*, *A Woman's Place - The Conflicting Effects of Sex Roles*, *Women and Community Stress*, *Avenues of Treatment*, *Physiology and the Emotions*. They all seemed equally important and, in deep ways, inextricably interrelated. There followed a final plenary, *Where do we go from here?*

Each session was highly structured; in a period of an hour and three quarters there might be four or five speakers, compressing into 15 or 20 minutes wide-ranging professional pre-occupations with, for example, bereavement (Dr Colin Parkes), battered wives (Dr John Gayforth), the relationship between social class and psychiatric disturbance (Prof.

George Brown), the effects of menstruation or hysterectomies on mental health (Dr Katharina Dalton and Dr Donald Richards).

Such a structure contains many specific ironies, but it also reflects two general points about the conference as a whole. First, the all-inclusiveness had a hint of defensiveness in it - as if the event had to justify itself. That any anxiety of that kind should have existed is certainly a symptom of the problems we were there to discuss, but the response in the conference itself must have dissipated such worries. The second point is that the day was more striking for the range and variety of the issues raised (and the fact that they were raised) than for the depth or texture with which any one of them was pursued.

Process is inseparable from content: it is important to emphasise a view which was voiced in one of the smaller sessions and which was clearly familiar to some there and very strange to many others: namely, that form, architecture, setting and structure are ideology. The conference organisation largely defined what could and did happen on that day.

This point should be enlarged in the light of some of the specific ironies I referred to above. The high proportion of male (medical) speakers was certainly one. But more important was the tension between form and content. The content was formal, expensive (registration £4.50), relatively professional: the labels used earlier for the conference members were not merely descriptive. Listed credentials of that kind play a significant part in determining the nature of the occasion. There were large auditoria, platform addresses. It was inhibiting, not to say frightening, to speak in that setting, let alone explore with any authenticity the conflicts in one's own life and roles. What was being identified so perceptively by Elizabeth Henderson in the plenary, and by others later on, as being very often at the root of many women's problems - inarticulacy, inferiority, deference, lack of opportunity to identify or explore feelings, undirected, unspecified need - the very problems that the conference was about, were somehow reproduced by the conference itself.

Some of the speakers (myself included) felt as constrained as the conference members. How does one 'address' an audience about

'consciousness-raising' or co-counselling or analytic therapy? And yet much that was valuable emerged in those sessions. They varied from one to another. In some there were active contributions about self-help groups, current research, field work, case work, and personal experience. Vignettes were exchanged - like the brother and sister, identical twins, identically dressed and identically dirty at the end of the school day. 'You look as if you've had a lovely day', was mother's remark to son. And to daughter: 'You're filthy!'

In others, there was less participation and a greater desire, apparently, to sit back and be told. Indeed, the quasi-professionalism reflected in the speaker/audience relationship created a tendency which permeated the occasion - one that may be regarded as the dominant ethos of the 'people professions': the client/helper relationship. Most of us there were caring women in the caring professions - a fact which should itself be subjected to political scrutiny. The issue is not whether or not to be professional. Rather, it may be that to examine the meaning and implications of a certain kind of professionalism could lead to the centre of the problems raised in the course of the day.

To emphasise the political dimension of the process of the conference is to raise a related issue: there were several incisive statements (for example, by Margaret Rustin and Sheila Bichard) of women's experience of the stress and conflicts inherent in their roles and position in society (traditional and changing); of the separation between home and work, of unreal standards and unquestioned assumptions. But time and again these analyses stopped short of any explicitly political critique - as if based on a view that intimacy has little to do with politics, rather than one which might be committed to working on a politics of intimacy - as some women there clearly were. There was no discussion of the division of labour - sexual, mental and manual - as the mainstay of capitalist society, nor of the structural role which the family, as the basic reproductive unit, plays in maintaining that system; nor of the consequent intensity of pressure against any fundamental change. Nor was the internalisation by women of these roles and structures discussed, and how that militates against individual change.

There was a tendency to get
*See shortlist for details of resources.

enmeshed in palliatives and to lose sight of the basic problems. Economics was never, I think, mentioned, and as one (middle class) woman sharply pointed out in the afternoon, the issue of class was barely addressed at all. Although the conference itself was an expression of communality, there was still a tendency within it towards the individualisation of problems rather than a more collective analysis.

It became clear that in so large and amorphous a body, the politics of the Women's Liberation Movement could not be assumed. Even so the conference itself was a form of consciousness-raising. But how much further *could* the communication have gone in that context? I wondered how many of those there would recognise my own sorts of dilemma - working within a system (trainee psychotherapist) and sustaining a critique of it. What they thought about the relationship between orthodox therapy and women's liberation. What could constitute radical therapy? How can one find a way of holding together the awareness of the significance of certain symptoms as a distillation of female alienation on the one hand, and on the other as still, and often urgently, requiring help? How do we relate our own positions of women in society and women in professional, helping roles when the two are brought together in a conference of this kind?

The day brought too the possibility of acting. As one doctor said in the final session to a complaint about the power of the medical model with all its hierarchical and authoritarian aspects: "If you don't like the medical model, change it". That's certainly easier said than done. Versions of the medical model form the bulwark of some of the most oppressive forces in capitalist society. Yet the challenge also reflects a very positive feeling about the conference. The problems outlined were fundamental, and the existing ways out, round and through, very few. Yet the fact that most of us were women, and therefore involved in versions of the issues raised from the very centre of our own lives was in itself significant. Although the conference did not escape the constraints and effects of its own structure, it did make explicit the consequences of fragmenting women's experience and stressed the importance of seeing it in a social and political context.

In one sense it couldn't win. Within that framework there were too many differing sets of values, different interests and priorities, different politics fundamentally - for many to go away very satisfied. In another sense it couldn't lose - the over subscription, attendance and participation were evidence of an intensely felt need to act on the situation and to approach psychiatry collectively and politically as women.

Margot Waddell

Share Rib 25

GAY WIVES and MOTHERS

A small group of gay wives and mothers met in Manchester recently to talk about the problems marriage and prejudice bring to them - from divorce and custody of children to bringing up children in a homosexual relationship and facing a hostile and repressive society. Most were members of the Campaign for Homosexual Equality whose Women's Campaign Committee feels it is time the gay movement turned its attention to the harassment and persecution gay women experience at the hands of GPs, psychiatrists, the courts, their husbands and society at large.

Here, some of them talk to *Marilyn Archer* about their situations.

Linda thought she was bi-sexual when she got married, and an affair both she and her husband had with a neighbour near their home in Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, proved to her that she definitely was. The marriage broke up after five years, not before Linda suffered considerable physical injury from her husband. She divorced him on the grounds of desertion - her lesbianism was not brought up in court and Linda won custody of their son Sean, now six.

If the divorce was a matter of plain sailing, life for Linda and her son has been far from smooth since. Her ex-husband recently began sending threatening letters, accusing her of being an unfit mother and talking about trying to get Sean back. Linda contacted a lawyer through CHE, but her main concern just now is the effect of a sexual assault on Sean by a young labourer working near their home.

"I brought the police in after Sean was assaulted, but I don't know if there is going to be a court case yet. Sean is sleeping very badly. He wakes up screaming in the night. He's had a very bad time. Every time his father comes to see him there are scenes and he's seen him hitting me - he's put me in hospital five times. So with the assault on top of that..."

The assault has made Linda very perplexed about making her gayness plain to Sean, but she felt it was important that children should understand parents' - and other people's - homosexuality. "I know I'm definitely a lesbian now. I've joined CHE and we're trying to get a group started in Milton Keynes."

"Her first lesbian affair was with a woman who lived opposite. 'We got friendly as neighbours. It was a threesome with my husband. We used to go over together. I got infatuated with her, but it broke up after a year and she left the district.'

She and Sean are living alone now in a flat. Linda doesn't work, but she gets social security benefits. It was

the first conference she had been to, and like most women who were there, she just wanted to hear how others coped.

Kath, a district nurse who joined CHE 18 months ago and said "It's been a fantastic help being in a movement", was at the meeting with Jane, a friend she had known for years who became her lover about a year ago. Kath is 33, has been married seven years but it has become intolerable and she intends to leave her husband soon, taking their children, a boy of six, and a girl of four.

"He's one of those people who thinks it's absolutely disgusting - dirty and unthinkable. He hasn't spoken to me for months and hasn't given me any house-keeping for ages. He doesn't trust me with money any more."

Kath's husband was quite "understanding" when he was told about her first affair, with an old friend who stayed with them because she had nowhere to live. "That was about three years ago. I thought he knew about it, but he didn't say anything and when she left, I told him. He said he was quite happy I had done. He thought it was something I would grow out of and seemed to accept it."

About a year ago Kath mentioned the affair to Jane whom she had known for years in folk singing circles. Their discussions led to an affair and the two of them are now quite obviously very happy - but for Kath's status as wife and mother.

"It took me about a year to decide if leaving was the right thing to do," said Kath. "Marriage is a very inbred thing. Once he went off to see a solicitor in Liverpool and came back and said 'I could get a divorce and custody of the kids on the grounds of what you've done.' He is so prejudiced against homosexuality. I wouldn't want the children to be brought up in that atmosphere. One of the main reasons I want the children is that if they were with him, he would bring them up so straight they would hate me."

With a divorce court to face - where her lesbianism will undoubtedly be an issue - Kath has already contended with her family and family doctor. "My husband started telling everyone a year ago about it. Jane lives with her parents and he kept ringing her mother up telling her what we were doing. My mother didn't want to believe it. She doesn't want the marriage to break up. She thinks the children will turn out to be delinquents."

"I went to see my G.P. and he said there wasn't anything wrong with being a lesbian but he made an appointment for me to see a friend of his who's a psychiatrist. He asked me if I wanted aversion therapy and I said no."

Sheena is a mother of four, married to a man she loves and very unwilling to consider divorce because she's lesbian.

She lives on a big council estate in an industrial Lancashire town. Her husband, a driver, is fully aware of Sheena's homosexuality. He brought her to the meeting in Manchester and often drops her off at meetings of CHE.

"I love Brian as a person and he doesn't seem to mind about me. He has his girlfriends - sometimes I fancy them too," she said, grinning. Having ruled out divorce or separation, Sheena won't consider letting a lover live with her either. Her main concern about being gay is how to tell the children, the eldest of whom, a girl, is 11.

"There are girls in Lorna's class who've got boyfriends already. She's a bit more sophisticated than our other kids. She doesn't play out anymore and she likes clothes and records. She likes going round the shops. I think it would be really difficult to try and explain to her about

being gay.

Generally, Sheena is frank with the children. Her husband's "tit and bum" magazines lie around the house along with her pamphlets from CHE and the Gay Liberation Front. There is no embarrassment about nudity either. "The younger kids will sit and read anything they find with no bother, but Lorna's getting to the stage now where she'll do it in secret and be embarrassed if she's found."

She does her best to prevent the kids getting too prejudiced - as they inevitably must with jokes and jeers about "puffs" and "queers" abounding. "One of them came home one day and used the word 'puff' - he'd heard something at school. So I just explained that it meant someone who liked people of their own sex rather than of the other and he seemed quite satisfied with that. I don't mind them using words like 'fuck' and long as they know what they mean and what they're saying."

In spite of her hope to prevent prejudice clouding her appreciation of life, Sheena admitted she did not know what to do about telling her children she herself was a lesbian.



Women at a rally in Trafalgar Square, London, organised by the Campaign for Homosexual Equality to launch its law reform proposals. The rally was part of Freedom to Love, a day of demonstration, protest and fun on November 2nd.

CHE's demands are law reform for Scotland and Northern Ireland; age of consent at 16; justice for the armed forces and merchant navy; freedom for gay women and men to display affection in public.

A group for gay women has been formed as part of CHE's London Youth Group, which meets weekly and also has contacts with other groups for women such as Icebreakers and Lesbians Come Together. "As most gay groups and certainly CHE groups tend to be men only or male-dominated", said Janet Clarke of the women's youth group, "the formation of groups like this is necessary both to enable gay women to get together and enable them to break down the male dominance in gay groups."

Janet Clarke can be contacted at 01-673 2703 or through CHELIC, 22 Great Windmill Street, London W1.

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NOTES ON WOMEN IN PORTUGAL

What possibilities exist for women in an economically under-developed country which has only recently been freed from 50 years of outright fascism? Where the rural population is largely made up of women, children and old people - the men are away, swelling the immigrant labour force of France, Germany and England. Where vast numbers of women have been recruited into the urban and rural work force in the last ten years. Where a women's movement will have to struggle not only against material exploitation but also against the ideological power of fascism and catholicism, through which women have traditionally seen themselves as submissive to God, man and family.

A group of English women outline the economic and social background to the reforms that have been introduced since the coup in April.

Rural Portugal

Portugal is one of the poorest countries in Europe, and rural Portugal is not one country but two. In the South there is a system of large estates owned by a few powerful landlords and worked by a landless peasantry. Women comprise the majority of agricultural labourers and their exploitation is severe - their wages, which average 50 *escudos* a day (less than £1), are 50% lower than men's.

Employment is seasonal, usually during the harvest; the workers are transported from their homes in small villages to the fields. During the season the older women commute daily in lorries and the young girls live in primitive dormitories attached to the enormous *haciendas* of the landowners. The girls are taken home every two weeks; since the coup they have been working a

5½ day week for £8. All rural workers are employed on a day to day basis, with no pension, no disability or unemployment benefits, and no help with medical expenses - a social legacy of fascism.

The system in the North is mainly one of small independent peasant holdings living on the borderline of subsistence. The land has been divided and subdivided by laws of inheritance which demand that each male child gets an equal share. Today one third of the farms are smaller than 70 yards square. This region has the highest illiteracy rate of the country - estimated in 1960 for the total population as 40%.

Towns and Industrialization

The rural dream of escape, to leave the countryside to its own ruin, has produced an internal migrant population - those

people who migrate to the big cities of Oporto and Lisbon. Vast areas of shanty towns have arisen on the cities' outskirts with the influx of these families. For example 150,000 families in Lisbon - an estimated third of the city's population - are homeless.

The rapid industrialisation of Portugal in the last ten years is the result of investment by foreign monopoly companies and has been responsible for the large recruitment of women into the workforce. This derives in part from the scarcity of male labour because of massive emigration of Portuguese men to other European workforces, and conscription - before the coup 250,000 men were serving in Mozambique, Angola and Guinea-Bissau. In addition women's labour is cheap. Women's wages before the coup averaged 1000-3000 *escudos* a month (£16-£50) - approximately half the men's rate - even though legally women are entitled to equal pay for equal work.

Both indigenous and foreign Portuguese industry has been built in part on the exploitation of African labour and the colonies' natural resources. The import of raw and semi-finished products from the African colonies at pre-determined and artificially low prices contributed to the high profits and rapid expansion which Portuguese manufacturing experienced in the 60s. Along with foreign-owned assembly works like electronics, these industries are major employers of female labour.

Figures for the overall percentage of women workers are not available, but an indication of their numbers and strength as a percentage of the total work force in specific industries is as follows: fish canning 85%,

electronics 80%, tobacco 66%, textiles 45%, rubber 37%, paper 32%. 4% of the population is in domestic service, which is primarily women's work. Women are also employed in those jobs which relate to children, eg nursing and teaching.

Women's Bodies

For the mass of women life has been brutalized. Poverty and lack of medical care for adults and children take a high and early death toll.

At 58 per 1000 live births, infant mortality is 4 or 5 times higher than in other Western European countries. Prison sentences of two to six years are handed out to women who have been aborted or aborted themselves. Little or no care is available even if a woman is dying from the effects of a mismanaged abortion. By means of a workers' insurance scheme the State provides poor quality civil hospitals, while the rich have a system of private hospitals. The budget figures for 1971 show that only 2.8% of government spending went on health as against 50% on defence.

Contraception is so expensive that only the tiny minority of women can afford it. The birth rate is the highest in Europe after Ireland. But lack of state contraceptive provision is not the major determinant of family size - as in parts of Italy, family survival may depend on the children's economic performance. Children from rural areas may be sent to the cities to earn money to send back home: young girls of 15 are employed in domestic work, boys of 11 or 12 in the building industry. Children in the poorest urban areas may provide the only family income, either through work or begging.



The coup

Before looking at the role of women's organisations in Portugal, it is important to make a few comments on the coup of April 25th.

The initiative for it came from liberalizing forces within the military - the disaffected lower-ranking officers who could see how the



strength of the liberation movements were making the colonial wars unwinnable; and those industrialists who wanted the economy to expand through strengthening links with the European countries and to redirect the large amounts of money spent on the wars to industrial growth. In addition the wage militancy within Portugal generated by the price rise of 20% in the last year brought home the political and economic instability of the situation.

The victory of the liberal forces has meant the granting of a number of reforms and the lifting of the severest methods of repression. Concrete gains for women include higher wages: now officially 3300 escudos per month minimum and 7500 maximum (although neither has been effectively implemented); an increase in child allowances; attempted rent and price control (consumer prices rose after April by 30%); a lifting of the ban on contraceptive advertising (now advertised on TV).

The Communist Party of Portugal and the Socialist Party, both members of the new government, have been active in initiating reform programmes for women. The women's organisation *Movimento Democrático de Mulheres*, a broad-based

movement which includes women members from both CP and SP, was formed in 1968 on an anti-fascist basis. Women from MDM are working within factories, trade unions, districts and in the Ministry. They are organising committees of women to check price rises and are initiating self-help child care; they are working within the Ministry of Labour to change the laws on pregnancy, birth and small children; they are organising around equal pay, three months' maternity leave, family planning, and are planning creches in each district for children from two months to three years. However, the organisation and ideology of the MDM are firmly placed within the framework of traditional family structures. Their emphasis is one of democracy and a repudiation of feminism.

Women's newly found strength has been profoundly affected by their traditional self-identity. Submission to the men and the family has been deeply entrenched by the ideologies of fascism - God, father and fatherland - and the Catholic church.

Although this identity has in part been exploded through the changes in their social relationships outlined above, the fragility of their position can be seen especially in the light of the continuing economic crisis. The question of women's status in waged work may be raised with the return of immigrants and army conscripts and their need for jobs.

The obscenity trial of the Three Marias, which began before the coup, provided a focus for feminist discontent, and their subsequent acquittal expresses a cultural liberalization. However the feminist movement - mainly writers and university students in Lisbon - which developed after the coup and organised around abortion, failed in their campaign to free those women who were serving prison sentences. There is a reluctance to take up the issue of abortion, even on the part of the MDM, on the grounds that the demand is "too progressive" for the stage Portugal is in.

The feminist movement more or less collapsed after the failure of the abortion campaign. At present they are thinking of theoretical study as a possible basis for solidarity, since they see the work of the MDM and feel a need to build an autonomous movement□

Jill Liddington is starting a women's studies course, 11 sessions from January 9, from 7 to 9, at the Adult Education Dept., the Abraham Moss Centre, Crescent Road, Manchester M86 9H, 061-740-1451.

SHORT

Groups

For lists of women's groups in your area, Working Women's Charter groups, local action groups, or whatever, contact the Women's Liberation Workshop, 38, Earlham St, London WC2, enclosing an s.a.e. for prompt reply.

Information

BIT Information, 146 Great Western Road, London W11 (01-229-8219); *Rising Free*, 197 Kings Cross Road, London WC1 (acts as bookshop also). A useful publication is *Writing on the Wall*, 14 Hanley Road, London N4, a bi-monthly (price 10p) carrying up-to-date information on left publications and activities.

The *Daily Telegraph* (01-353-4242) runs an information service on current political events, while two other useful agencies to contact for information are the *Labour Research Dept.*, Industrial Research Centre, 78 Blackfriars Road, London SE1 (01-928-3649), and *Counter Information Service*, 52 Shaftesbury Avenue, London W1.

News

To get information and news to the press telephone the *Press Association*, 01-353-7440, or the *Associated Press*, 01-353-1515.

Left newsdesks, include:

Militant (01-739-7176); *Morning Star* (01-405-9242); *Peace News* (01-837-4473); *People's News Service* (01-735-2088); *Red Weekly* (01-837-6954); *Socialist Worker* (01-739-6361) and *Workers Press* (01-720-2000).

Papers and journals.

Big Flame, 21 Woburn Hill, Liverpool 13; *Case-Con* (social work), c/o basement flat, 110 Lansdowne Way, London W11; *Civil Liberty* (NCCL), 186 Kings Cross Rd, London WC1; *Community Action*, 7a Frederick Mews, Kinnerton St., London SW1; *Enough*, c/o Bristol Women's Liberation Centre, 11 Waverly Rd, Bristol 6; *Labour Weekly*, 107-111 Fleet St, London EC4; *Morning Star*, William Rust House, 75 Farringdon Rd, London EC1; *Peace News*, 5 Caledonian Rd, London N1; *Race Today*, 184 Kings Cross Rd, London WC1; *Rank and File Teacher*, 86, Mountgrove Rd, London N5; *Red Rag* (marxist feminist), 9 Stratford Villas, London NW1; *Socialist Woman*, 182 Pentonville Rd, London N1; *Socialist Worker*, Corbridge Works, Corbridge Cres., London E2; *Women's Report*, 75 Albert Palace Mansions, Lurline Gardens, London SW11; *Women's Voice*, 8 Cotton Gardens, London E2. See also the review section below on current issues of relevant periodicals.

Bookshops

London: *Banner Books* (Chinese literature), 90 Camden High St, NW1; *Bethnal Rouge* (gay literature), 28 Bethnal Green Rd, E2; *Centreprise*, 34 Dalston Lane, E8; *Collet's*, 66 Charing Cross Road, WC2; *Compendium*, 240 Camden High St, NW1; *Freedom Bookshop* (anarchist), 84b Whitechapel High St, E1; *Grass Roots* (black literature), 61 Golborne Rd, W10; *New*

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LIST

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Feel free to send any information
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Beacon Books, 76 Stroud Green Rd, N4;
Rising Free, 197 Kings Cross Rd, WC1;
World Books, 375 Cambridge Heath Rd, E2.

Bath: University Bookshop, Claverton Down.

Birmingham: Action Centre, 40 Hall Rd, Handsworth; **Key Books**, 25 Essex St; **Peace Centre**, 18 Moor St, Ringway.

Brighton: Public House, 21 Little Preston St.

Bristol: Chapter and Verse, 86 Park St; **Women's Books**, 11 Waverly Rd.

Cambridge: Last Exit, 54 Mill Rd; **Bowes & Bowes**, 1 Trinity St.

Canterbury: Albion Bookshop, 13 Mercery Lane; **Dillon's University Bookshop**.

Cheltenham: General Store Basement, 11 Grosvenor Place South.

Coventry: The Left Centre, 65 Queen Victoria Rd.

Doncaster: Proletaria, 289 Station Rd, Dunscroft.

Durham: Ivan Corbett, 89 Elvet Bridge.

Exeter: University Bookshop, Devonshire House, Stocher Rd.

Huddersfield: Greenhead Books, Carlton House, Whitestone Lane.

Hull: John Sheridan, 19 Anlanby Rd; **Bogus**, 21 Princes Ave.

Ipswich: Orwell Books, 4 Upper Orwell St.

Keele: Students Bookshop, University of Keele, Staffs.

Lancaster: University Bookshop, Alexandra Square, Bailrigg.

Leamington Spa: The Other Branch, 7 Regent Place.

Leicester: Black Flag, 1 Wine St.

Leeds: Books, 84 Woodhouse Lane; **Subterranean**, 66a New Briggate.

Liverpool: October Books, 99 Mount Pleasant; **News from Nowhere**, 9 Sefton Drive.

Manchester: Son of Grassroots, 100 Oxford Rd.

Newcastle: People's Bookshop, 189 Westgate Rd.

Oxford: East Oxford Advertiser, 35 Cowley Rd.

Plymouth: Narnia, 8a Camden St, North Hill.

Redruth: Books and Things, 6 Penryn St.

St. Albans: Index Books, 101a, St. Peter's St.

Sheffield: Sheffield Bookshop, 93 Wicker St.

Southsea: Spice Island, 30 Osborne Rd.

Southampton: Red Light Books, 202 Derby Rd; **The Bookshop**, 35 St. Mary's Rd.

Libraries

Fawcett Library, 27 Wilfred St, London SW1 (01-828-4966). Loads of material on women, mostly historical stuff on women in the nineteenth century and the suffragette movement. Phone the librarian a few days in advance.

Guy Fawkes Memorial Library, 197 Kings Cross Rd, London WC1. Collection of current left papers, pamphlets and documents. Phone Rising Free (01-837-0182).

Institute of Race Relations Library, 27 Pentonville Rd, London N1 (01-837-0041).

Marx Memorial Library, Marx House, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London EC1 (01-253-1485).

Feminist switchboard

Don't forget that *AWARE* (Action for Women's Advice, Research and Education) has opened its information service by telephone for enquiries on every subject concerning women's struggles, at 14 Radnor Terrace, London SW8, tel: 01-622-8495, on week nights between 7 and 9.30pm.

Education

Contact your local Workers Educational Association for information on relevant courses. Most courses began in September but you might be able to join an ongoing one in January. Worth trying, anyhow.

Help

I need your help in compiling this page. Please let me know if I'm omitting things you'd like included or if there are sections which could be more fully dealt with. Please send in details of actions or meetings in case our information sources this end fail. Items should be received here six weeks before issue date at the beginning of each month.

PUBLICATIONS

A brief list (interest indicated implicitly by selection) of some publications around this month that you might like to read and use: *Libertarian education* (Articles on sex, sex roles and education, price 12p; *Undercurrents*, the magazine of radical science and people's technology, no. 7, price 35p; *How to publish your very own underground newspaper*, by the Tree Ranger Tribe (contact Compendium for this one; no price given); *Shrew* (latest issue is on marriage; price 15p); *Women's pension rights*, by the NCCL (address above); *As we see it: the problems of one-parent families told in their own words*, by Gingerbread (9 Poland St, London W1) and the National Council for One Parent Families (255 Kentish Town Rd, London NW5), price 10p, available from either organization.

All these publications should be obtainable through the Women's Liberation Workshop (specifically feminist ones) or through Compendium, the addresses of both having been given above.

FILM

Women's film group

Film Notes is a practical guide for women making films, compiled by the London Women's Film Group and available from them at 7-9 Earlham St, London WC2. The group's films so far made are available from The Other Cinema; write to them for a catalogue and further details. The group is currently involved in making a programme for the late-night TV series *Open Door*, to be screened on January 28th; check this date nearer the time in *Time Out* or newspaper listings.

Woman and Film magazine

This is available from 2802 Arizona Avenue, Santa Monica, California 90404, USA. Individual subscriptions \$2.50 overseas, institutional subscriptions \$5.50 overseas.

Notes on women's cinema

This is Screen pamphlet No.2, by the Society for education in film and television, price 25p, available from the Society at 63 Old Compton St, London W1.

ARTS

Posters

See Red is a women's poster collective that's been formed recently to combat the image of the model woman.

Making posters, providing facilities for other women involved in the struggle to do so, and collecting examples of the positive and negative examples of the image of women for the use of any group, periodical or individual presenting a constructive statement on matters concerning women's liberation. Contact the collective at 30 Camden Rd, London NW1, or ring Pru, 01-267 2309.

Phillipa Ecobichon

The new season at Garage Gallery, Covent Garden, has opened with work by Phillipa Ecobichon, who lives in the Isle of Wight. She hates London, and glad of an excuse to escape *Spare Rib's* cramped office, I agreed to meet her half way in Wiltshire to talk about her work. Her genuine interest in and attachment to the countryside forms the basis of her art. 200 years ago she'd have probably been a landscape painter forced like Rosa Brett to work outdoors disguised as a man, exhibiting under a male pseudonym.

As it is, her way of working was regarded with some suspicion by people at her art school. She was in an all women sculpture department with an all male teaching staff. Great emphasis was placed on mastering welding techniques for which nothing in the students' past education had prepared them. Phillipa realised that welding would never become second nature to her to the extent that she wouldn't have to think about it. Moreover, she felt distant from manufactured materials like steel - they bored her. Born and brought up on a farm, she was far more interested in natural materials. With an impressive display of conviction and confidence - I'd have gone on struggling with the welding torch - she began to work with earth. One of her first pieces consisted of an 8' hemispherical hole and a corresponding mound 8' away. Needless to say she was teased - a woman toiling down an 8' hole in high summer. Whereas welding bars of steel together... 'How erotic,' was a joking comment she often received - which rather backs up the view of a member of the Women's Art History Collective who insists that earth art is the modern equivalent to painting the female nude - Mother Earth and all that.

Another comment she frequently hears is, 'Oh look, a female Richard Long.' (an artist who works in a similar vein). Whether or not a man's originality would have been so immediately questioned is (almost) beside the point. More to the point, why should an artist's work be regarded as somehow devalued because another has used similar ideas or techniques? How many artists have used oil paint or portrayed the Virgin Mary? Phillipa was finally driven to the library to look up the work of the people who were supposed to be influencing her, and found that yes, there were other artists who shared her ideas. But so what? So quite a lot apparently because every time I describe her work to people, they never wonder what it means to her, only who has done it before.

Besides questioning the authenticity of her work, people were bothered by its ephemeral nature. 'What will you have for your dip. show?' she was always being asked. In reply she started to

photograph her work in different stages. The photographs became an integral part of the process, beautiful in themselves, and capturing and recording the passage of time. Time and change obsesses Phillipa. My favourite amongst her photographic works shows a wych elm tree taken from precisely the same spot every month of the year, every day for a week and every hour of a day.

Unlike some artists who wrap cliffs or plough up stretches of the countryside, Phillipa records the action of nature rather than stamping her presence on her surroundings. For example, one of her photograph sequences shows the sea gradually eroding a cube of red moulding sand which she had constructed.

But it's not a passive art form - many of her works involve detailed planned processes which mean as much to her as the finished records. And talking to her I was reminded of the artist who photographed men who made remarks and whistled at her in the street. She felt that she was somehow establishing her existence as an active being by taking their photograph. There's something of that in Phillipa's work - a taking control of time and the chance action of nature.

RP

Garage Gallery
Earlham St, London WC2,
December 4 - Jan 11.

Phillipa's work can also be seen in a touring exhibition, the Arts Council's *An Element of Landscape*: until January 4 - Bradford City Art Gallery
January 11 - Feb 19 Bolton Art Gallery
Feb 15 - March 16 Plymouth Museum
Mar 22 - April 20 Dorset County Museum, Dorchester

Self help health groups

The Bristol Women's health group have asked us to mention that they are a Women's Abortion and Contraception Campaign group.

The Cambridge Pregnancy Advisory Group tell us that the Eden Street address is only the place where they do tests twice a week, people wanting to contact them ring (evenings only) 59798 or 52871.

The Edinburgh Women's Liberation Sexuality and Health Group are only doing self-examination (with discussion) every other Wednesday evening - the other meetings are given over to discussion of sexuality. Venues are posted in the workshop.

*Women in Psychiatry

The Women in Psychiatry workshop have compiled a list of resources that may be helpful to women under stress and a reading list. Copies available (10p) from Vicky Randall, Polytechnic of Central London, Room 708, Elsie Court, 20-22 Great Titchfield Street, London W1.

For useful reading on radical approaches to psychology and psychiatry see: *The Radical Therapist* ed. Radical Therapist/Rough Times Collective, Penguin 1974, 60p.

Family, Marriage and the Struggle of the Sexes ed. Hans Peter Dreitzel, Macmillan Paperback 1972, £1.15.

Laing and Anti-Psychiatry ed. Robert Boyers, Penguin 40p.

The Divided Self R.D. Laing, Penguin.
Red Rat: a magazine of alternative approaches to psychology, 30p, from 42 Essendine Mansions, Essendine Road, London W9.

FOURTUNES!

SPLINTER "The Place I Love"
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Produced by George Harrison, Splinter are a duo from Newcastle who have already had a Top 20 hit with "Costafine Town." More of their bright self-penned work can be found on this debut album for Dark Horse Records.



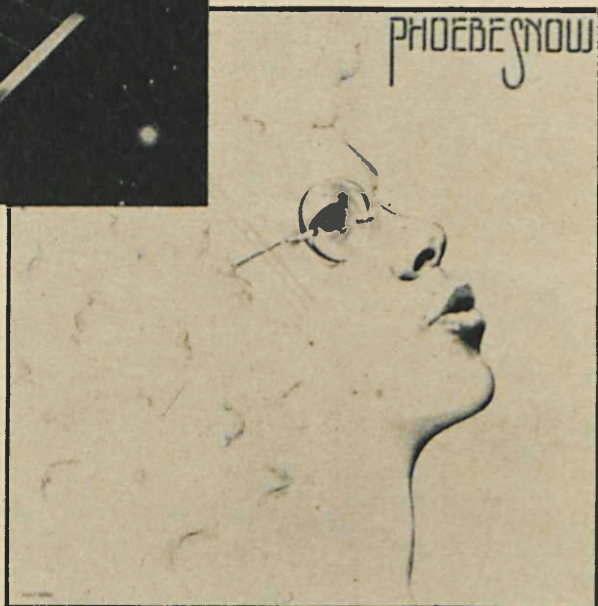
ANDY FAIRWEATHER LOW
"Spider Jiving" AMLH 68263

After arriving back on the charts after a long absence with "Reggae Tune" Andy has released his debut album "Spider Jiving." Produced by Elliot Mazer and recorded in the States with the help of Henry McCullough and the Memphis Horns, "Spider Jiving" chronicles Andy's experiences in the record business to date.



SUPERTRAMP
"Crime Of The Century"
AMLS 68258

Already being hailed as one of the bands for 1975, Supertramp have produced a superb album, produced by Ken Scott. SOUNDS said "think of Genesis, The Beach Boys and various heady influences, along with a smattering of the Floyd and you have a basic idea of what the Tramp are about. Everything on the album is excellent."



PHOEBE SNOW AMLS 68283

Having been raised on Busby Berkeley, Judy Garland, and Shirley Temple, it sure was a strange meld when Phoebe Snow's guitar teacher turned her on to the basic rural blues of John Hurt and Bill Broonzy. By combining torch songs, jazz and basic blues licks, Phoebe has rapidly developed her own unique style, which can be found on her debut album which is already a Top 30 hit in the States.

ON A&M RECORDS AND TAPES.



Advice...Info...Odds &

Work in Women's Liberation

I will be graduating from University next summer and am very interested in working full-time at something connected with the women's movement rather than just doing things in my spare time, although naturally I don't expect to earn very much at it. Can you tell me the best way to find out what sort of opportunities are available? Do groups like AWARE, for example, use full time researchers and compilers?

At one time I was also very keen on doing post-graduate work in women's studies, but gave up in despair when I realised that the courses which do exist are either part of an undergraduate course, rather than a post-graduate course, or else extra-mural courses for people with other occupations. I could of course do solitary research, I suppose, but (a) I lack the grounding in sociological method which would be necessary to get a place (I'm studying English) and (b) I'm not at all sure that academic research of that kind is the best way of studying women's studies. Please, are there any post-graduate courses that you know of organised on a group seminar level rather than an ivory tower research approach? Best wishes,
Ms Hilary Croxford.

* Most of the work in Women's Liberation is unpaid voluntary work done usually in the spare time of people who have other jobs. The movement has no money and is therefore rarely able to offer women jobs. Groups like AWARE run entirely on a voluntary basis, though it may be possible that at some time in the future they will obtain a grant or financial support from some other body.

I know of some possibilities for postgraduate research in women's studies. The University of Essex run a course at seminar level which does not require a degree in sociology and the Institute of Education, Malet Street, London, is starting a course next term for graduate teachers particularly, which will be run by Marguerita Rendall. If it is successful it is likely that a similar course will be held next year which you might be interested in. If you are still toying with the idea of doing some research on your own, there are two women I know of who would probably be willing to supervise a thesis. They are Marion Shaw of the Department of English at Hull

University, and Mary Jacobus of the Department of English, Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford.

Incidentally, if there are any women interested in women's studies courses which are run as part of an undergraduate course, they might be interested in the NUS pamphlet that has just been produced on the subject. Obtainable from NUS Publications, 3 Endsleigh Street, London WC1H 0DU.

Feminist/Lesbian Groups

I'm an American visiting Cambridge for a year (I'm 15 and live at home still, so must remain anonymous). Can you tell me some feminist and/or lesbian groups and pubs? Thanks,
In sisterhood.

* Contact Cambridge Women's Liberation, Women's Centre, 48 Eden Street, Cambridge. Tel Cambridge 63886.

Open Relationships

I wonder if anyone is in the situation we seem to be in at the moment? I have been living with Pete for two years now. I'm involved in the women's movement (as he is committed to it), and we're both keen on setting up a Commune eventually with some people we really get on with, maybe having kids and becoming more self-sufficient.

Neither of us believe that people are monogamous, and we feel that people should share sexual experiences more often. We want to stay together, but also share experiences with others, but we find that very few people we know are interested. They seem to identify sex with possession of the other person, and either say it would jeopardise their relationship, or they say they are quite happy as they are (or, more hurtful, just look blank and keep quiet when we bring the subject up).

Are there some people who feel like us? We want to get close to some people in a sexual way because we feel that it is enjoyable, and we are not interested in splitting up relationships or making people unhappy. I don't remember reading anything in Spare Rib about group sex. Does anyone want to get in touch with us and tell us what they feel about this idea? Yours in sisterhood,
Name and address supplied.
Write Box No. 311

Drinking/Eating Places

I should like to take this opportunity to add a word about women's clubs and eating places mentioned in your 28th issue, page 16. As you so rightly mention, the two or so that do exist are almost exclusively for gay women - I don't know of any exclusively for women but not necessarily gay. However, I would like to mention that the "Gay Girl's Guide" is not a particularly useful publication. As I understand, it is not a guide to clubs for gay women but simply to gay clubs, some of which admit women. In addition, I believe that the information in it is neither particularly accurate or up-to-date. I would suggest that it might be wiser to refer gay women to the Gay Switchboard, Icebreakers, Friend or some other such organisation, telephone numbers for which often appear in your own publication, Time Out or Gay News. These organisations keep fairly extensive lists of meeting places for women etc.
Yours sincerely,
Venetia Hands (acting for Ginger Weintraub)

* Icebreakers. Contact 01-274 9590 every evening between 7.30 and 10.30 to talk over problems with other gay people.

Is consistency too much to expect? In Issue 28: In reply to enquiry for names of clubs, pubs and eating houses in London for women only, you sympathise: "I'm afraid there's not an awful lot of choice..." and conclude "Do readers know of any such places?"

Issue 27: In reply to a reader's complaint about a men-only bar in Middlesbrough, you sympathise: "Until the Sex Discrimination Act is passed, any landlord is entitled to refuse a woman entry to a bar and if he wishes to retain 'Men-Only' bars. Disgusting, isn't it?" Well is it or isn't it? Respectfully yours,
John Bilsborough.

* A fair comment perhaps, but, contrary to what you might assume from the apparent inconsistency, we do not advocate replacing male oppression of women by female oppression of men. However, since so much discrimination against women still exists, it is necessary at this point for women to get together on their own, so that they can build their strength to fight and bring an end to this discrimination.

Social Work

Can you possibly advise me how to go about becoming a social worker. I haven't a clue what to do. I have no degree and work in a store, so would have to 'start again' for this position. Is the answer to get a degree? - or can I get training elsewhere? Perhaps you can help.
Nancy.

* You don't have to have a university degree to become a social worker. In this issue of Spare Rib the education column criticises the Social Work Diploma Course, and last issue discussed the problems inherent in social work itself. For information about training, contact the Social Work Advisory Service, Information on Training and Careers, 26 Bloomsbury Way, London WC1. Telephone 01-242 5654.

Work in Glass

I am an art diploma student. I've recently become interested in working in glass, preferably as an apprentice. After many inquiries, I received a letter from the head of the glass department at Stourbridge stating most definitely that as a woman I would not be able to find employment or training anywhere as a glass blower in England. I think the writer, herself a woman, was in fact quite indignant about this as she also informed me that women glass blowers were quite commonly employed in Scandinavia. So apparently there is no logical reason for discriminating against women in this profession. Although I have personally forsaken this aspiration for the time being, I'd like to see some investigation into this state of affairs.

Is there a glass blowers' union who could perhaps be harassed by us? I say us meaning Spare Rib itself.
Yours sincerely,
Christine Shirley.

* There is a glass blowers' co-operative in London consisting of five women and one man. It was set up to provide glass makers with the studio facilities which they are unable to find with the British Glass Industry. At the Glasshouse glassmakers exhibit and sell their work and people can see glass being blown. They say that they'd be happy to tell you about opportunities for women glass blowers and training facilities. Courses of instruction in glass blowing are given and are open to all, including complete beginners. The address is The Glasshouse, 27 Neal Street, London WC2. Tel 01-839 9781, and it is open Mon-Fri 10.00 - 5.00, Sat 11.00 - 4.00.

Info...Odds & Sods...A



apples, umbrellas and what?

There is a vast difference between the way social work is taught and what the job actually involves. Although taught that women are 'better' social workers than men, the lives of women are neglected in the course itself.

Joanna Bock

In 1971 I left University with a mediocre English Degree and without a clue as to how I was going to earn my living. I wasn't interested in teaching but I knew, somewhere along the line, I would probably have to take a further course which would give me skill of some kind. After much deliberation I decided to do the Social Work Diploma Course at Sheffield University.

The decision to take the course was something in itself. I didn't know, or want to, make a decision then about the type of work I would go into later. What I needed was a sense of direction and a chance to explore new areas. The idea of actually being a social worker quite horrified me, because I held the standard image of the social worker as the no-nonsense liberal, who wore trouser suits and a charitable face. Moreover, I didn't want to have anything to do with 'caring' for people. I tended to see caring as the only function of social work. This seemed useless because it was limited by rules and regulations. It would therefore be emotionally frustrating. I thought community work or research would avoid this contradiction. It appeared a happier and more sensible choice. I think I refused to admit at the time that I was giving myself a soft option.

In 1973 I started at Sheffield. The course extends over two years: one year awards a diploma for social work; two years gives full professional status and a bigger pay packet. The Social Work Department assumes that all the students will want to complete two years. Most students were seconded. That is, they were on a salary from their Local Authority to whom they were contracted for two years after finishing the course. No one - apart from myself - left after only one year because they'd had enough.

The first year is primarily academic, the second is practical. Out of five subjects there is a choice of studying four, only Social Administration being compulsory. Psychology was considered 'advisable' which left us with Sociology, Criminology or Philosophy. I choose to do the first two. Most

weeks we visited various establishments connected with Social Work. During the Easter holidays we were on 'placement' which means working within an organisation for a limited period. In the summer we had a final eight week placement, which was assessed as part of the Diploma.

The course was unevenly balanced in favour of Social Administration and it was in this course that I met with a phenomena I hadn't reckoned on - the *mixed-up* liberal conscience. The very large number of church goers amongst both staff and students had a significant effect upon the way discussions were conducted. It was rather like offering the apple, to suggest that there was something rotten in the Welfare State.

Eleanor Rathbone once said, 'I think one of the most interesting points to consider between various professions... lies in this consideration - whether they make a small difference to a great many lives or a great difference to a very few lives.' Any suggestions that social work could make a great difference to a great many lives was

complacently rejected as being unrealistic and impractical. Any challenge to the placid assumptions behind the role of the social worker, that the individual's failure to cope might originate in the social structure, was smilingly ignored.

Despite the fact that, at University I was surrounded by people who really cared about the well-being of their future clients, their unwillingness to see social problems in terms of class, sex or race, lead them into a disassociated position. The conflicts involved in being a professional sympathiser could not be discussed. It was at precisely this point that the liberal retreated from a tolerant stance into a conservative one.

The social worker has the responsibility of defining what family breakdown means, for instance, when a child is 'at risk', and the family is no longer 'safe'. The social worker then has the authority to intervene, and remove the child into the care of the Local Authority. Work then has to be done in patching up the family so that the child can return as soon as possible.

When discussing this issue at University, it was generally agreed that intervention into other people's family life was disturbing. But if all this was for the advancement of a happy family life, then the role of the social worker was totally acceptable. I baulk at the idea of taking children away from their parents and yet, from brief experience, I know that many children are better off away from their families. I believe that family life itself contributes to family breakdown. The alternatives the state offers in terms of institutionalised child care are however disastrously inadequate, the logical justification for this being that the family is the place for children anyway. Given a situation where most of my colleagues believed wholeheartedly in the value of family life, and that it was impossible to question the 'holiness' of the family, it was hard to argue through the contradictions presented to me. Living conditions, financial and employment problems were regarded rather as excuses than explanations for 'problem' families.



Battered Wives Centres could only be regarded as interim measures to facilitate readjustment into family life rather than out of it. To suggest the women might prefer to live communally was to challenge the family unit and thus the job we were being trained for. Social workers exist to ensure that the families remain 'safe'.

Some of the most tricky aspects of social work concern women, and it was disturbingly obvious that these areas remained undiscussed throughout the year. In Psychology I wrote an essay on the influence of the mass media in which I concentrated on the position of women as consumers and as targets for advertising and political campaigns. This was noted as 'an interesting idea', but otherwise deemed totally inadequate.

Women's crime was not mentioned at all in the Criminology course. 'Because at any one time women constitute a minor proportion of the prison population.' The only time I remember women and crime being mentioned was in one ludicrous example of how Freudian theories can go wrong. It has been maintained that women only shoplift articles which have some symbolic, sexual significance, that is phallic objects. This theory was tested on 500 women shoplifters. Only 8 objects stolen could be interpreted in this way, and 2 of those were umbrellas!

In the past it was possible to do social work without specialised training. The increasing number of universities and technical colleges now offering social work courses indicates the growing concern for professionalism. As the status of the job is elevated, so is the mystique surrounding it. This was carefully presented and maintained in the Psychology course. Social work was likened to psychiatry, in the sense that the doctor knows more about the patient than the patient knows. Not only do social workers have degrees and diplomas tucked in their belts but they can also



—NOT ONLY DO SOCIAL WORKERS HAVE DEGREES & DIPLOMAS TUCKED IN THEIR BELTS BUT THEY CAN ALSO READ THEIR CLIENTS' HEADS

read their client's heads - especially if they are women social workers. We were taught that women are better judges of people than men, and that they are more tactful.

In trying to question this, when discussing the role of the social worker in a Social Administration seminar, I suggested we might look at it in relation to woman's role in the family. 'But there are a lot of men here', replied the tutor, 'and many in the social services.' 'And look at the kind of men we are...', dolefully muttered a male student.

Social workers should be seen and not heard. That is, they should give nothing of themselves

away before a client. Case work involves listening and interpreting your client's explanations. In practice I have always found one-way conversations very hard although in terms of the job, I appreciate the difficulty of both responding to a client's situation and staving off dependency. However, over-dependency on the part of the client I see as symptomatic of the status of the job, where the social worker is presumed to have deeper insights.

I felt, all year, alienated from the assumptions inherent in the course. In raising the question of women I was met with helpless indifference and misunderstanding. I emerged exhausted and a battered caricature of myself. A caricature because, I suppose, one becomes rather tiresome and predictable in one's efforts to break through that solid wall of liberal assumption about sex and class. To me it could never have been just 'an interesting idea', and for the Department it ceased to be even interesting, unable as it was to use the 'idea' or explore beyond it ■

Joanna says that, however unwittingly, the course presented the contradictions in such a way that she could not let her efforts go unfinished. As a social worker now, she belongs to the Case Con women's group.

Case Con is a group of radical social workers attempting to develop useful ways to work through the contradictions. The Case Con magazine is available from Flat 3, 55 Highbury Park, London N5 1TJ, for 15p plus postage.

Literature from six centuries by and about women

by a Woman Writt

Edited by Joan Goulianos

Over three hundred years ago the poet Anne Finch recorded her difficulties as a writer, saying that her work would be criticised because it was 'by a woman writt'. Fortunately, like many others before and after her, she continued to write despite ridicule and discrimination.

The extracts chosen by Dr Goulianos are taken from novels, autobiographies, diaries, as well as poems, short stories, letters and protests—many of which have until now been hidden away in rare books and manuscripts. Here is Margery Kempe in the fourteenth century describing her struggles as a mystic; Aphra Benn, a seventeenth-century writer and spy speaking about passion; Mary Shelley in the nineteenth century evoking the loneliness of her widowhood; and Muriel Rukeyser in the twentieth century writing poems about war, politics and childbirth.

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“I am not strong enough to live in this world of people and paint...”

Joelle Weeks describes the life of Dora Carrington who like so many women nurtured other people's talent and neglected her own

HOW easily great talents can wither in the shadow of greater ones. One of the most intriguing artists of the 20th century must surely be the woman who simply called herself Carrington. A distinctive and idiosyncratic young painter, Dora Carrington inexplicably chose to spend 18 years as the life-partner of Lytton Strachey, allowing her gifts to be dissipated in the scathing force of the genius who, in “Eminent Victorians” revolutionised the art of historical biography. Carrington suffered from a constant conflict between her total involvement with people and her desire to paint but never succeeded in resolving it: “I am not strong enough to live in this world of people and paint” she wrote to Strachey, “But when I envisage leaving you and going into isolation, I feel I should be so wretched that I should never have the spirit to work.” She was considered Lytton's appendage; lacking faith in her painting or herself she accepted this role, dwelling uneasily among the Bloomsbury Group, to which he belonged. Yet her reputation has survived with Strachey's, and not merely as an adjunct to his curious, tortured life. The numerous letters that she wrote brilliantly encapsulate the artistic and literary world of England between 1915 and 1930, and reveal an original and complex personality, aware, sensitive, self-centred, terrified – but also strangely fascinated by the games of commitment and promiscuity which she saw around her and with which she was frequently confronted. Sometimes she was able to concentrate on living with a companion who was in some ways a father substitute. At other times paroxysms of loneliness and despair and her suspicious isolation would lead her into love affairs which gave her only an after-taste of inadequacy – only glimpses of perfection.

DORA de Houghton Carrington was born in March 1893 at Hereford, the fourth in a family of five. Her father, then over sixty, was tolerant and generous. He had unfortunately married an ex-governess who, in a grotesque way, embodied the unyielding narrow-mindedness and the virulent puritanism of the 19th century, and who attempted to educate her children in the fear of the Lord and an obsession with sin. Carrington never loved her mother or tolerated her dictatorial godliness, and all her life suffered from a morbid fear of authority. The children's friendships were rigidly censored. “Keeping secrets from one's parents was almost the ultimate sin”, and yet lies▷



Dora Carrington

protecting privacy were the only unavoidable safety valve. Carrington developed the craft of alibis to an art. . . "It is like being in a cage here, one can see everything that one would love or enjoy and yet one cannot. My father is in another cage also which my mother put him and he is too old to even chirp or sing." When, after a severe stroke, her father was paralysed, Carrington became obsessed with the idea of escape. In 1909 she was admitted to the Slade School of Art, and family pride induced her mother to allow her to leave home. Her first act of self-assertion was to cut her hair. "For a long while our mother continued to lament the loss of 'such beautiful hair' as if it were a family rather than a personal possession." Wrote her brother Noel. She also gave up her christian name and called herself Carrington.

Her repugnance for family life spurred her on to create her own circle of friends. When she met the painter Mark Gertler, the drabness and dullness of her past existence seemed to vanish; his awareness of the colour and movement of life echoed and magnified her own. Gertler was bewitched by her but she valued him merely for friendship. She had hated being a woman ever since she could remember: "You know how I have always hated being a woman. I think I mind more than most women. The Fiend which most women hardly notice fills me with such disgust and agitation every time, I cannot get reconciled to it!" Making love to Mark Gertler made her "feel ashamed and unclean", She wrote, "I do not love you physically. Do not think I rejoice in being sexless and am happy over this. It gives me pain also." She also valued her freedom too much to become anyone's wife or mistress. Yet Gertler could not let her be: her rejections both wounded his vanity and disrupted his creativity. His accumulated demands and grievances forced Carrington to fight back, and very soon their relationship turned into a conflict of wills. By 1915 they had reached a deadlock.

DURING the Autumn of the same year an encounter irrevocably altered the course of her existence: while staying with the Bells at Asheham she met Lytton Strachey. At first glance it would not have seemed possible that she would devote her whole life to him. He was a Cambridge intellectual who concealed under a pathological reserve a caustic mind and a compelling exactness. He thought of himself as "old and diseased", and was a homosexual. But as time went by she became increasingly dependent on him for own happiness. Yet it is difficult to believe that she thought of him as a lover; he seemed to her almost a God-like figure, moving in remote spheres. As gradually he grew more accessible, he became a father-figure on whom she could rely. "I would love to explore your mind behind your finely skinned forehead. You seem so wise and so very coldly old. Yet in spite of this what a peace to be with you, and how happy I was today." Her peace of mind mainly sprang from their lack of sexual life which cancelled out any threat or aggression. As for Lytton, at first he was gratified by the fascination he seemed to exert upon her. If at times Carrington's lack of culture irritated him he took pleasure, nonetheless, in educating her.

Her commitment to Lytton helped Carrington to break away from Mark Gertler. The break was far from being final since she could never resign herself to lose a friend or a lover. Yet it was a crucial decision, for in rejecting him she was casting away the one person who might have encouraged her in her painting.

She took the plunge into selfless love. She never made any demands upon Lytton or ▷



The Mill Tidmarsh. Oil by Carrington.



Mrs Box of Welcombe. Oil painting by Carrington.

Such a lunch at the Bush Inn, Morewenstow, for 1 / 3d, cream, saffron buns, and black-a-berrie jam. Then I went after tea to see the Boxes. On the path down the hill Mrs Box appeared driving the cows; she held up both arms and waved them, with a stick in one hand. And then ran towards me! It was delightful to see her again. (to Lytton Strachey 1919)

instilled into him a sense of guilt or responsibility. Their life together lasted until Lytton's death interrupted only by their separate explorations into various geographical and emotional spaces: Lytton forever searching for his childhood heros, and Carrington attempting to come to terms with her womanhood.

For 18 years she devoted herself to her adopted father in the setting which later inspired some of her best paintings: the Tidmarsh Mill House, near Reading, which she had discovered while cycling along the Thames Valley. There she shared her time between her naive, precise and luminous paintings, her passion for horticulture, and a flow of letters and visitors. But even in that reassuring place there were times when fear would poison her sense of security and their carefully composed quietitude. The fear of losing Lytton.

ALTHOUGH her existence with Lytton seemed to fulfil Carrington, she was unable to prevent the intrusion of emotions from outside. In 1918, Ralph Partridge, a war-time friend of her brother Noel, somehow blundered into their rural bliss. Partridge was good-looking, self-assured and rather formidable. He soon fell in love with "artistic damsel" and Lytton did not long resist his charm. The idyllic trio satisfied Carrington most of all; for the first time she was acting as a catalyst in Lytton's life, and thus becoming more necessary to him. But the delicate balance was broken by Ralph whose overwhelming desire was to marry Carrington. She consistently avoided his proposals and began to resent more and more the gap between her sensitive magical world and Ralph's more prosaic one. By 1920 Ralph was near to a nervous collapse and Carrington began to realise that if she turned him away, she might also lose Lytton. In May 1921 she resigned herself to becoming Mrs. Partridge and attempted to justify this to Lytton in a letter.

"All these years I have known that my life with you was limited . . . Still, it is too much of a strain to be quite alone here waiting to see you or craning my eyes and nose out of the top-window at 41 Gordon Square to see if you are coming down the street. Then I know that we would be better friends, if you are not haunted by the idea that I am sitting depressed in some corner of the world, waiting for your footsteps . . . I saw the relief you felt at Ralph taking me away, so to speak, off your hands. . . I cried last night Lytton, whilst he slept by my side. I cried to think of a savage and cynical fate which made it impossible for my love ever to be used by you. . ."

It did not provide the end of their relationship. The couple came back to live at Tidmarsh. Lytton, far from being tormented by her marriage, was relieved at this new emotional independence together with the security that a shared existence with Ralph and Carrington gave him.

In June 1921, only a few weeks after her marriage, Carrington seduced Gerald Brennan, one of Ralph's closest friends - a sensitive being who seemed to her to embody the vagueness and affectionate superiority of her elder brother Teddy whose memory had haunted her since his death on the Somme. Brennan also fell in love with her, and she wrote to him: "I think you know that the discovery of a person, of an affection, of a new emotion, is, next to my painting, the greatest thing I care about."

Ralph was shocked, angry and hurt, and in spite of the affair he was having at the time with Clare Bollard, refused to forgive them. It took all of Lytton's concern and persuasion to orchestrate a reconciliation. And from crises to reunions,

from travels to wanderings through Spain, North Africa, Italy and France, the triangular relationship survived until 1924 when the household transferred from the Tidmarsh Mill House to Ham Spray in Wiltshire.

THE paradise of the Mill House was dead and gone, and Ralph and Carrington were prepared to accept a new variation to their emotional entanglement, so long as Lytton remained the nucleus. Ralph had fallen in love with Frances Marshall, an intelligent young woman, less neurotic and more prosaic than Carrington, and had decided to live with her. Carrington was hurt at the thought of losing Ralph, and mildly attracted to her rival, although she felt more secure than she had ever been with Lytton, no longer finding it necessary to hunt on the outskirts of their world for scraps of reassurance. She was decorating Ham Spray, an 18th century house of the late Jane Austen period. Apart from a few commissions for tiles and public-house signs, she had almost given up her own work. She wrote to her brother: "I've become signboard painter to the county of Berkshire. I've done and finished one signboard for the Tidmarsh Inn and now I've three other commissions given me on the strength of it. If the Brewery will stump up £10 a sign I'll be content to be their painter for the rest of my life, and when you come back my humble efforts will greet your eye at every pub you tarry at."

Her life at Ham Spray with Lytton was all important and must never be disrupted. As for Gerald Brenan, he was too much of a flesh and blood character to be moulded into a sheer reflection of her dead brother. When he ceased to be inaccessible and aloof she rejected him, writing, "I do not believe any particular circumstances made our relation impossible. It was rather my predestined inability, (which whenever I think of my past life is forced upon me) to have any 'intimate' relations with anyone. I believe I am a perfect combination of nymphomaniac and a wood nymph. I hanker after intimacies which another side of my nature is perpetually at war against."

The year 1924 was for Carrington not a time of stability but of isolation and morbid introspection. She had resigned herself to her failure as an artist; shyness had made her refuse to show her pictures at various London group exhibitions, and Lytton's encouragement was scarce. She no longer believed in herself. She wrote of her failure to come to terms with her own sexuality: "Probably if one was completely Sapphic it would be much easier. I wouldn't then be interested in men at all, and wouldn't have these conflicts. . . . Somehow it is always easier if I am treated negatively, a little as if I was not a female, then my day-dream character of not being a female is somehow pacified."

Then she fell in love with Henrietta Bingham, daughter of the U.S. Ambassador in London, whom she wrote to Brenan "has killed my love for les jeunes hommes." She was sufficiently aloof and inaccessible to fascinate Carrington. "I dream of her six times a week. Dreams that even my intelligence is appalled by. And I write letters and tear them up continually." But the affair turned out to be only a cruel game, and Carrington lost.

HER life with Lytton was also under strain. In spite of their mutual tenderness both were getting very weary of the blows suffered all along their separate quests for love. Lytton was writing "Elizabeth and Essex"; and struggling through his love affair with Roger Stenhouse. Although most of Carrington's close friends were then women, she had fallen in love with Piers

Lytton Strachey. Oil painting by Carrington.

Tonight it looks wonderfully good, and I am happy. But then I dread showing it... Is it vanity? No because I don't care what they say. I hate only the indecency of showing them what I have loved. (Carrington's diary 1917)



Noxall, "a rugged and reserved" man with a passion for ships, drink and women, and 10 years younger than herself. "His remoteness just suits me," she wrote, "for I feel I am not being 'observed' all the time, that no reactions are 'expected' of me." She allowed herself to be torn apart by his gigolo's boorishness in an attempt to reach her dead brother and her childhood dream.

In January 1932 Lytton died of a cancer of the intestine. For three months Carrington tried to survive, with anguish and yet a cold determination, weighing up the fragments of her shattered life. "What point is there now in what I see everyday, in conversations, jokes, beautiful visions, pains, even nightmares? Who can I tell them to, who will understand?", she wrote in her diary.

On the 10th of March Leonard and Virginia Woolf came to see her: "She seemed helpless," Virginia wrote later, "deserted like some small animal left. She was very gentle. Sometimes laughing. Kissing me. We had tea and broken biscuits. She stood by the fireplace. Then we said we must go. She was quiet and showed no desire for us to stay." The next morning Carrington shot herself. The aim was not accurate enough to kill her instantly but she was mortally wounded and died that afternoon. Her death was curiously typical of her life, an impulsive act with consequences tragically adult and conclusive. She threw a stone in the eye of the sun, out of spite or despair, then let herself sink into nothingness without looking back to the bright yellow-haired child painting the reflections of dreamy summers in the cool millpond of Tidmarsh Mill. O



"The Mark on the Wall". Woodcut illustration by Carrington for *Two Stories* by Virginia and Leonard Woolf (Hogarth Press, 1917).

Acknowledgements:

Michael Holroyd's biography of Lytton Strachey published by Heinemann.
Carrington: Letters and Extracts from her Diaries chosen and with an introduction by David Garnett, published by Jonathan Cape Ltd

Quentin Bell's biography of Virginia Woolf, published by the Hogarth Press.

Joanna Mason for permission to reproduce the portrait of Mrs Box.



I don't know much about Socialism, Indira darling, but we in Washington can tell ruthlessness when we see it!

cartoon of Pat Nixon and Indira Gandhi from the *Indian Express*

BOOKS

Indira by Krishan Bhatia Angus and Robertson £4.25

In India, as elsewhere, women's liberation and the class struggle are interdependent. If Indira Gandhi had been a socialist as she claims to be, the position of women in India might have improved. Infact she appears to have done nothing for the liberation of Indian women. At the lowest level women in India face severe oppression. Economic conditions and religious rules leave neither men nor women any choices in their lives but the woman's role is far worse than the man's. In the upper and middle classes things are very different, women often face fewer barriers than they do in Britain. There are several women in positions of power, cabinet ministers, state chief ministers, and governors.

Mr Bhatia is a special correspondent of the *Hindustan Times*. The editor of this newspaper was recently asked to resign after the publication of articles of the government. It is unlikely that this book will attract similar displeasure. Mr Bhatia writes of Indira's childhood and youth in the manner of a doting uncle. Her role in national affairs he finds more difficult to deal with. He says for example that Mrs Gandhi was chosen to be prime minister mainly because she was Jawaharlal Nehru's daughter. But he does not mention the way she has fostered the cult of her father. This might not seem surprising in Britain where Nehru is remembered as a great socialist and is criticised only by anti-Indian and pro-imperialist writers, but in India the truth about Nehru is too important to gloss over. A recent book, *'Six Thousand Days'*, by B.G. and Amiya Rao, shows how his socialism too was just a facade and how the Indian people still live with the Nehru legend on their backs. Mr Bhatia does not describe how Mrs Gandhi was exploited this legend, how in the 1971 election many Indian villagers when asked who they had voted for had replied "for the 'bahu' (married daughter)". * However he occasionally reports other people's criticisms of her, how she used and increased sectarian enmity to achieve the downfall of a democratically elected

communist government in the southern state of Kerala; how she gave in to pressure from rich farmers and abandoned a plan to tax them and so on. But each time he absolves her and he scurries back with woolly paragraphs beginning:

"In other major developments during her stewardship of the Congress Party Indira displayed markedly greater highmindedness and sagacity..." etc.

Mr Bhatia does not discuss whether the bourgeoisie, (typified by the Nehru family) who led the independence struggle and have since ruled the country can give the Indian masses the socialism they were promised. Instead he describes what liberals in the West would like to read - how well the British treated their political prisoners in pre-independence days. (Of course the Nehrus being upper-class were treated as A class prisoners, life was very different for B and C class prisoners) "Indira had come to Naini" (the prison) "determined not to get bored..." Sharing the court-yard, as she was, with twenty other political prisoners, she saw the danger of being drawn into a pointless pastime of gossip and idle women's talk. She therefore made it a firm rule that until 5 p.m. everyday none of the other jail inmates might speak to her except when absolutely necessary." But the book fails to tell us how women political prisoners are being treated in Indira Gandhi's socialist India: "The girls were stripped naked and made to lie on a table. They would begin by burning them with cigarette - from the neck, to the breasts to the stomach and so on. After this, one of the girls who refused to speak had an iron ruler inserted into her rectum. As a result of repeated torture her rectum and vagina were joined. After this the emaciated bodies of the girls were taken back to the jail by police van." **

Mr Bhatia makes it clear that Mrs Gandhi has no particular plans for India's future except that she means to stay in power. If she were a man she would probably not have been admired for her viciousness and ruthlessness. But for a woman to have these conventionally male qualities is considered wonderful. The book is a pompously written history of the ruling class - a mass of facts whose significance does not emerge.

Amrit Wilson

* *Six Thousand Days* published by Stirling New Delhi.

** From the All India Women's Association quoted in the *illustrated weekly of India*

by a Woman Writt:
Ed. by Joan Goulianos
New English Library

£3.50

Literature from six centuries by and about Women

*Did I, my lines intend for
public view,
How many censures wou'd
their faults persue...
True judges might condemn
their want of witt,
And all might say, they're by a
Woman writt.
Alas! a woman that attempts
the pen,
Such an intruder on the rights
of men...
To write, or read, or think, or
to enquire
Wou'd cloud our beauty, and
exhaust our time,
And interrupt the conquests of
our prime;
Whilst the dull mannage of a
servile house
Is held by some our utmost, art,
and use.*

Anne Finch (1713)



Anne Finch



Harriet Martineau



Margaret Walker

These lines are echoed and re-echoed, in one form or another, throughout this collection of six hundred years of women's writings. What is most striking in the passages about personal feelings or in the comments on the state of women, is the sense of recognition - the familiarity of the expressions of frustration, inadequacy, love, resentment, dependence, determination, which have only comparatively recently become a matter of shared consciousness. The book provides an interesting, and often unexpected, historical, perspective on that collective awareness.

The range is extensive - extracts from the journals, essays, novels and letters of twenty women of widely differing education and social position. It includes the bitter fury of Jane Anger's attack on the 'devilish practices' of men, in her *Protection for Women* (1589); Margaret Cavendish's eloquent (and apparently unfashionable) defense of the 'inequality of the sexes as being a law of nature; some rather mannered verses from Aphra Behn which do little justice to her versatility; Mary Wollstonecraft's acerbic attacks on the injustices of the female lot; somewhat florid extracts from Mary Shelley's *Journal* and her novel *The Last Man* (a passage from her *Frankenstein* would have done her more credit); a collection of pieces from the writings of Anais Nin, whose description of the still-birth of her baby daughter was for me the most powerful and moving statement of the whole book.

Joan Goulianos would have done better to have limited the collection to passages conveying explicit expressions of women's consciousness and experience and have left out some pieces which, for reasons mainly of brevity and lack of context, actually detract from the authors' achievement and do not encourage further exploration. In such cases the stated aim 'to draw attention to lesser-known writers' does them a disservice. Olive Schreiner and Kate Chopin are cases in point. The selection of Harriet Martineau's description of an Eastern harem gives little sense of the originality and remarkable range of her interest and intellect.

If others like Dilys Laing and Muriel Rukeyser, are 'lesser-known' perhaps they deserve to remain so. Yet such a dismissal itself raises an important issue - a contradiction almost - which may be inherent in an anthology of this kind with these stated aims, i.e. the implications of even thinking in terms of 'well-known' and 'lesser-known'. For such an approach is itself a symptom of the very kinds of oppression and inhibition which so many of these passages are expressing. The collection represents a tension between what have evolved as criteria for 'good' literature, and the kinds of thought and feelings which it is now considered important to express. Few of these pieces could be described in conventional terms as having any great 'literary merit', but the best of them are, above all, honest and intensely personal. In these terms the aims of the book are fairly realised: to make available the works of lesser-known writers 'who deserve more recognition, especially for the ways in which they wrote about women'; 'to suggest how different women's literature was and could be from men's'.

Reading through these passages, there are many moments of interest, of involvement and of identification. Yet overall, there is a curious sense of impersonality about the book, a lack of sustaining energy, a feeling of dispersal rather than

of concentration. Such a feeling can be partially accounted for by the inevitably fragmenting nature of such an undertaking. The pieces are often either unrepresentative or too short to give a very full idea either of the individual, or of the issues discussed. One is repeatedly left tantalised and frustrated. In a selection of so many pieces, the selections themselves are diminished. Tighter editing might have helped this problem: one seeks some cohering factor, some more obvious sense of unity beyond the fact that the passages included are 'by a woman writt'.

Nevertheless, taken together these pieces give a full and sometimes moving picture of the struggles of women over the centuries, of their feelings, ideas, beliefs and experiences in and for themselves. As such it could be said to perform, implicitly, an important political function - though one that may be more evident to some readers than intended by the editor, who nowhere makes an overtly political statement.

The lines quoted from Anne Finch provide a fitting epigraph in more ways than one. The writing itself is neither very sophisticated nor very expressive, but that somehow seems less significant in the light of the feelings and passion behind it. That these feelings should have been made available is important, that the anthology itself could have been made more imaginative and more coherent is, perhaps, less so.

Kid's Books

Nicholson
by Jorgen Clevin
English translation by
Lisbeth Madsen
Published by Ernest Benn
£1.25

English translation by Lisbeth Madsen

Nicholson is a happy-go-lucky tramp whose needs are few. He has rejected mod-cons and money and finds he doesn't need clothes. Doubtless we could all learn from his example, but real life isn't quite so simple.

This book is a new slant on the theme of losing one's clothes and getting them back again. At the same time consumer goods are explicitly rejected and the question of nakedness is raised. "Nicholson only has the clothes he stands up in." (and his toothbrush, of course) and page by page he manages to give them all away. Nicholson lets it all hang out - or would have done if the illustrations had gone full frontal - but where is his penis? The birds use his hat as a nest, the squirrels, who have just got married (why?) but live in separate trees, receive his scarf to bridge the gap, the mice ask for his socks to make new clothing (but it's a pity Mrs. Mouse gets lumbered with the sewing), the stork, whose long legs are cold, needs his trousers. Gradually Nicholson strips himself naked...

Unfortunately he gets had up for indecent exposure. "Why do I need clothes in such beautiful weather? It's hot and I'm not cold." Very logical - but the law isn't and the weakness of this book is that Nicholson's question is never answered. But he gets back his clothes in his hour of need en route to the police station and escapes going to prison. Nicholson lives to streak again.

Children will enjoy the humour of these bright, simple illustrations which have enough detail to sustain the interest of the very young. In this Scandinavian village setting we find the stock characters of children's books - mayor, soldiers and policeman - who inevitably enforce the cover-up.

Gill Pinkerton
Children's Book Study Group.

You can have my shirt to cover
the statue,' said Nicholson



from Nicholson by Jorgen Clevin

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THEATRE

Dirk Bogarde and Charlotte Rampling in the *Night Porter*



'A woman's composing is like a dog's walking on his hind legs. It is not done well but you are surprised to find it done at all.'

(Cecil Gray 'A Survey of Contemporary Music')



Clara Schumann



Ethel Smyth



Alma Mahler

Whilst Marion Lees was doing a music degree course at York University, she researched a project on the history of women and music. Here, extracts from her essay entitled 'The Silenced Tradition', reveal the bitter struggle of women musicians and the tragic sacrifices of three composers.

When I first began to realise that being a musician and a woman was somehow different to being just a musician, I decided to try and trace my musical ancestry in the attempt to reconcile the two identities. The first name to occur to me in this connection was that of Ethel Smyth, one of whose songs was included in a collection that my music master played through at school. He punctuated the performance with, 'what a masculine use of the German sixth' and 'only woman to have made any mark as a composer' etc. The memory remained with me, possibly because having had no brother, and therefore no occasion to envy his penis during my formative years, and having a strong-willed mother who produced magic from the piano, I could not quite see why composition appeared such an exclusively male preserve.

During my two years of solitary at the Royal Academy of Music, the thought was again stirred by the stern visage of Ethel Smyth immortalised in oils on the wall of the common room in which one was allowed to talk but not smoke. When I looked her up in the Oxford Companion, I saw

when she was born, when she died, that she had her Mass performed at the Royal Albert Hall, that it didn't really make any difference that she was a woman, she was a composer. Didn't it though? Why are Stainer, Sterndale-Bennet, Sullivan, (whatever is thought of their music today) still well-known and performed? Where is Smyth? Why is her music buried deep in the bowels of the Westminster Library? Why are her books out of print? Why have recordings of her work been deleted from the catalogues? Stainer's 'Crucifixion' gets plenty of airings - why not Ethel's Mass?

I tried another name - what about Mendelssohn's sister Fanny? Turning to Mendelssohn, I looked in vain through Felix's comings and goings and compositions for a mention of his sister. Deciding to adopt a more general approach I turned to 'W' hoping to find a paragraph about Fanny under 'Women Composers'. No such heading, only 'Women's Musical Clubs' see United States of America 5. Obviously Fanny wouldn't be there but perhaps there would be an American ancestress. Under

paragraph 'd', 'Some features in American music today that strike a European observer favourably are the following:- The interest taken in musical activities by the women of the nation, the large attendance of women at the regular concert series of the great orchestras etc., and the organisation of the women's music clubs (Membership of those included in the National Federation was 300,000 by 1928). However, among Red Indian music collectors the three most important were women - Frances Densmore, Alice C. Fletcher and Natalie Curtis. The labours of these researchers must have seemed a little surprising to the Indians, as Indian women take relatively little part in music, their magical powers being supposedly inferior.'

There followed a list of white American composers who incorporated Indian melodic material into their compositions, there was no woman's name among them but by this time I wasn't surprised. Things gradually fell into place as I began to realise that the situation of women in music was really no different to the situation of women in any other male-dominated sphere in

the world. There were these brave women, pioneering into probable dangers to record wonderful strange music, only to hand it over to the men back at home, much as they would hand them their slippers or dinner, and then sit back to let the big brains reap the creative benefits of their work. Certainly in America it was not only the Indians who supposed the magical powers of women to be inferior.

What was it, is it, about being female that doomed the composer to anonymity, or appeared to all intents and purposes to change her sex, or both? Why was it that women could achieve mention as executant artists, collectors of material, music assistants of all description, yet, 'There has never been any woman composer of great merit'? I began and have continued ever since, chewing what I then bit off.

"The woman who participates in male culture must be rated by the standards of a tradition she has had no part in making". Shulamith Firestone.

Virginia Woolf said that a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction. How then were women with neither advantage able to develop as writers of some of the finest books in the English language, while 'there have never been any women composers of great merit'?

room of her own. If she tried out ideas of her own on the piano she could easily be heard and questioned by whoever was in the house. Writers were able to disguise their creations, how would she disguise hers? Suppose that, by working away from the piano and somehow managing to carry out all her daughterly duties, she produced an orchestral composition, its publication would be far less likely than the publication of a novel. Music is expensive and cumbersome to print, and there is no guarantee of any interest being shown in it, hence no guarantee of financial return on a large initial outlay. A performance has to be fought for, and there was no established musical champion to put in a good word for our heroine's effort. Her assumed name was masculine but unknown, and musical conservatism being what it was in England, the chances of the composition attracting notice would be very slim. Even if by some miracle it was performed, she would probably not be able to attend. How could she dare to before establishing a favourable reputation anonymously. Men, as Ethel Smyth observed, 'do not like their preserves intruded upon'. If she revealed her sex too soon the critics would surely have made similar remarks to those recorded by Ethel on the subject of Amy Johnson's solo flight: 'If it had been a man I

exciting development is given in a special women's issue of *The Music Student* 1918, by Marion Scott, herself a composer, violinist, writer on music and a poet and Hon. Sec. of the RCM Union since its beginning in 1906.

In *Female Pivings In Eden* (1933) Ethel Smyth speaks of the necessity for women to have opportunities in the musical world, as well as opportunities to learn the rules if they are to become composers. Playing in an orchestra gives a thorough musical education and refinement, with the opportunity of private and chamber engagements and good fees for lessons. Women have always had unlimited opportunity to perform 'wifely' musical roles unbegrudged by men – such as the teaching of school children and amateur unpaid singing in choirs – but the knowledge to be gained from these in no way compares to the educational value of the professional musician's life.

During the First World War it seemed as if women were well on their way towards partaking in the musical world a lot more fully. However in 1933 Ethel Smyth was baffled that the doors opened to women in the war were suddenly closed again afterwards. 'Mozart even declared that they have more natural gift for stringed instruments than males; and one reason he gave



Ethel Smyth



Alma Mahler and her daughter, Anna.



Clara Schumann.

Why did a parallel tradition of secret composition not enable later generations of women composers to emerge unashamed, brandishing their equivalent of the novel? The ability to perform on the keyboard and with the voice was almost a necessity for young unattached ladies to attract the highest bidder, the bigger and better her dowry of accomplishments the more the man's good taste was reflected.

In the same way that Virginia Woolf invented a sister for Shakespeare, in *A Room Of One's Own*, I will invent a would-be composer friend of the Brontës, a vicar's daughter in the next parish. It was impossible for her to hear a good performance of contemporary music. Where would she find a good enough teacher, who would pay him? Going away to study was out of the question, who would attend to her parochial duties? How could she desert her ailing father while her brother was at university? If she managed to get hold of scores to study, all attempts at broadening her musical scope would be subject to constant interruption as she had no

should say it was a wonderfully courageous feat, and a great test of endurance. As it was a young lady I say it was sheer bravado and a love of notoriety'. And such is the world of music that, given the composition survived this far 'a work of very great value, that has cost its creator months and months of labour, may go back, after one performance, into the composer's cupboard practically without a soul outside that concert hall having even heard of its existence.' Ethel Smyth.

As our heroine had such a narrow chance of ever having a large scale work performed she decided to stick to the composition of short *Préludes*, *Réveries* and songs along the lines of those she had been obliged to play for others' amusement.

In the 19th. century hardly any woman played an instrument other than the piano or harp, there was only one eminent woman violinist, Norman Neruda, (born Moravia 1839), who was given her chance by Joachim. Early in the 20th century women began to flock to the music colleges and soon numbered half the students, learning most instruments. A contemporary account of this

was their greater delicacy of touch, another the readier access of a conductor to their emotions' (These qualities are traditionally 'womanly') Women cellists were banned at the BBC for reasons unspecified, and all the interesting, educative jobs such as the training of choruses, stage management, conducting, technical stage work went to men. Because of these barriers in training and opportunity Ethel could say 'there is not at this present moment one single middle-aged woman alive who has had the musical education that has fallen to men as a matter of course, ever since music was!'

Why, when women seemed to be getting a foothold in the musical world, did they miss their step and find themselves in a worse situation in 1933 than at 1918? I think it is because they believed, along with Ethel Smyth, that 'Politics, even of a milder brand than the militants adopted, are incompatible with art'. It is often argued that politics are completely separate from music, when it is taken for granted that the music is male music. When considering politics and women's music however, it soon becomes

glaringly obvious that the two are inseparable. Let us see politics in action in the lives of three roughly contemporary women composers, through their own writings.

Alma Schindler – Mrs. Mahler (1879-1964)

Gustav Mahler – “It’s not so simple to marry a person like me. I am free and must be free. I cannot be bound or tied to one spot.” Alma – “I learned to hold my tongue. He was very touchy.”

If she had not been married to Mahler, Alma Schindler would probably have been known in her own right as a composer. It is impossible to guess whether she would have remained obscure or made quite a mark, simply because she was married to a man who was also Mahler. It was not just that organising the man’s life and having his children left her no time to compose, Mahler expressly forbade her to do so. Afraid of her youth, beauty and potential ‘He wanted to make them safe for himself by simply taking from me any atom of life in which he himself played no part. I was a young thing he had desired and whose education he now took in hand’. Fearing the same fears as his primitive ancestors he demanded complete control over her every activity and strangled her existence. Alma’s only mistake was in loving him, her upbringing conditioned her not to question the status quo. Although Mahler purported to love Alma desperately it never occurred to him until too late that her talent was as worthy of nurture as his own. ‘Art’ in no way overcomes the fundamental differences of sex-role conditioning on its own.

Alma: ‘He saw nothing of the unending tortures his mother had to endure from the brutality of his father, who ran after every servant, domineered over his delicate wife and flogged his children. His mother patiently bore her lot and, as the years passed, her joy in Gustav’s expanding life was her greatest and at last her only happiness’. Alma’s talent he took as nothing more than accomplishments, worthy of attention during their courtship in order to gain possession of her. ‘As we left I said I should like to be engaged as a conductor at the opera, and he promised in all seriousness to let me try my hand; it would give him at least great pleasure.’ But before they were married Mahler insisted that she choose between him and her composition; he once called unexpectedly during a counter point lesson ‘and that was the end of counterpoint for ever and a day’. ‘I happened to say (*In a letter to Mahler*) that I could not write anymore that day as I had some work to finish, meaning composition, which up to now had taken first place in my life. The idea that anything in the world could be of more importance than writing to him filled him with indignation, and he wrote me a long letter, ending up by forbidding me ever to compose anymore. It was a terrible blow. I spent the night in tears. Early in the morning I went sobbing to my mother and she was horrified by his unreasonable demand, that, deeply as she loved him, she urged me to break with him. Her unqualified support brought me to my senses. I recovered my calm and confidence and finally wrote him a letter promising him what he wished and I kept my promise.’

Her unquestioning acceptance of Mahler’s dictates produced in her a self-torturing conflict, always trying to reconcile her love for Mahler on his terms with the bitterness she felt at having to sacrifice her creative autonomy. ‘I buried my dream and perhaps it was for the best. It has been my privilege to give my creative gifts another



St. Cecilia by Raphael.
Ironically, St. Cecilia is the patron saint of music.

life in minds greater than my own. And yet the iron had entered my soul and the wound has never healed’. This ‘split personality’ reveals itself in seemingly diametrically opposed statements. ‘He lived a life of torment, and inflicted torments a thousand times greater on me – I knew once and for all that it was my mission in life to move every stone from his path and to live for him alone’. Her only permitted musical outlets were in his service. ‘I tried playing the piano very softly, but when I asked whether he had heard me he said he had, although his studio was far away in the wood. And so I changed my occupation; I copied all he had ready of the fifth, straight away, so that my manuscript was ready only a few days behind him.’ Mahler treated her as an unpaid servant, he always took a sleeper on the many long railway journeys they made while Alma had to sit.

He wore tailored suits and hand made shoes whereas Alma wore the same dress for five or six years running. ‘I was unable to accept an invitation to lunch with Baron Albert Rothschild

because I had not a hat to put on. It did not occur to either of us that I should buy one. Mahler went alone’. The gradual erosion of her personality made her existence a hollow sham. ‘And so it was that the rigid economy, the cares of the household that had to be run in exact conformity with his wishes, the children and the daily round all combined to wear down our love for each other.’

‘I was shy when I was a girl, but in Mahler’s company the affliction got to such a pitch that I could scarcely make a rational reply when spoken to; I felt I was nothing but his shadow’. ‘Often I had to affect a cheerful air with tears ready to burst from my eyes. And I must not let him see. I could have found in my music a complete cure for this state of things but he had forbidden it when we were engaged and now I dragged my 100 songs with me wherever I went, like a coffin into which I dared not look’. ‘I cancelled my will and my being. He saw in me only the comrade, the mother, and housewife, and was to learn too late what he had lost. His genius ate me up although he meant no murder.’ Mahler realised the grave mistake he had made in forbidding Alma to compose when he found her songs by accident. ‘God, how blind and selfish I was in those days’. Alma had to forgive him. When one of her songs was performed he was more excited than over his own works. Hearing that it had gone well he said ‘Thank God’ over and over. On his death ‘It was as if I had been flung out of a train in a foreign land. I had no place on earth.’ ‘I lived his life. I had none of my own.’

Clara Wieck – Mrs. Schumann (1819-1896)

Clara Wieck had the advantage of a rigorous musical upbringing. Her father, Friedrich, wanted her to be the greatest woman pianist in Germany, and so jealously guarded her. When he noticed her interest in Robert Schumann she wrote in her diary “Papa is furious with me, he threatens to stop giving me lessons. I am to learn housekeeping and cookery”. When she married Schumann she was a lot more established a musician than he was. Jealous of her reputation, and anxious to establish his own, he forbade her to practice. Four months after their marriage she wrote, “If only the room partitions were not so thin! I fear my piano playing will deteriorate altogether”. Like Alma Mahler, she was completely responsible for the family and finances.

As they had very little money Robert agreed to let her go on tour but his pride was so offended at having to sit in the audience at her concerts, even though she performed his compositions and perpetually tried to draw him into the limelight, he felt that he was reduced to being Herr Clara Schumann. He made a scene and made Clara pregnant so that was that for another year. Clara resigned herself to motherhood deciding that his was the greater talent. “What glory there is in so tireless and potent a creative spirit; how fortunate I hold myself, that heaven should have given me comprehension and heart to grasp fully the worth of such genius. Often I am overcome with acute fear when I regard my happy lot above that of millions of other women, and then I ask heaven if it is not too much. What are all the shadows of material existence compared to the joy and bliss which I possess in the love and art of my own Robert.”

When Robert had to be taken to the asylum she could only cope with the eight children by farming them out onto relations and friends and playing the piano to earn money and to satisfy

her own longing to play. Brahms worshipped her as a figure on a pedestal, the consort of his hero. Although allowed an independent musical identity by Schumann, it was only the existing strength of her reputation that enabled her to continue her career after marriage; it is often said that as a pair they were able (at least for a time) to achieve a truly satisfying balanced relationship, but because of the existence of marriage as an institution that reinforces and reproduces gender division, a woman of her capabilities felt that she had to step down and take second place, as many other musical women before and since. In spite of her musical background her own music was stiffly conventional and imitative of the male composers she had studied, although technically faultless, in contrast to the warm sensitivity of her playing.

At the age of 12 she had four pollonaises published, which were received in silence. As with Alma, her wifely duties, her familial duties and her deference to accepted ideas of female behaviour prevented her compositional development.

Ethel Smyth (1858-1944)

Ethel Smyth's success in her lifetime was, as she admitted, "Owing to factors nothing to do with musical giftedness". Her advantages were, "good health, persistence and fighting instinct and a small independent income".

A Colonel's daughter, she was tough, hearty, patriotic and a terrible snob. Of England "A race that instinctively brushes aside all that nonsense about people being equal; that knows they never were and never will be equal; that in such inequalities, as may be studied even in the animal kingdom, nature does one half, and luck the other." The writing of her memoirs encouraged curiosity in her music, and it is a good job that she was almost as fond of writing books as she was of writing music, as most text books, musical dictionaries etc bear only scant reference to her. All her books are now out of print as are her scores. Her Mass was performed in the Albert Hall, thanks to the Empress Eugenie; "Very few girls live next door to rich Emperesses of pronounced feminist sympathies". Parry, Stanford and Sullivan didn't lift a finger to help her.

She studied in Germany, and always had more success with performances there than in England. She says because their stronger musical tradition was more ready to accept music from a woman than were the conservative English. In England the mass that was first performed in 1892, had to wait until 1924 for its second

performance. Considering the unpopularity of the English in Germany almost throughout her life, it is almost incredible that her works were rejected by the English, no-one was more patriotic than she. Beecham said, "If they (women instrumentalists) are pretty they upset the men, if they are ugly they upset me." So that Ethel can write in exasperation "I believe Englishmen to be congenitally incapable of judging a women's work at all."

Many of her writings concern feminist issues, *Female Pipings in Eden* is an essay on woman's place in music and the impossibility of being taken seriously in the 'man's world' of composition. Concerning an article in which Einstein is reported to have talked about 'the fundamental weakness of the female organism' she commented, "Are then even the greatest men half-witted when wrenched away from the traditional male theory as to woman's proper sphere?" Why should men worry about competition from women in science, "Surely there are enough rocks, papyri, flowers, insects, stars and corpses to go round." She knew very well the difficulties and frustrations of being an oddity in the music world. The clannishness of the men operating the musical machine infuriated her; rather a man than a woman orchestral player, rather a mediocre male than an exciting female piece, decisions for performance in the hands of groups of men rather than individuals, if the machine was put into motion for a woman many men became very annoyed.

She took two years off from composing to fight with the suffrage movement. She had no wish to alter the status quo but desired to join it on equal terms with men. Not seeing how inextricably woman's creative capacity was bound up with her prescribed social role, she could write "Another thing that rather depresses those who take an interest in the future of women musicians is, that nearly every woman possessed of power is busy running some man, or underpinning some male show" although she was the first to admit that she was exceptionally privileged and that most women found it impossible to earn an independent income from music, marriage for most people being woman's only approved 'occupation'. She made the mistake of trying to separate politics and music and not succeeding.

Along with Virginia Woolf she believed women equally capable of creativity, and she believed that difference of sex was important to difference of music. She saw the need for a female tradition, and urged women to aim at mental independence and not to be distracted by men. 'Ought not education to bring out and fortify the differences

rather than the similarities?' But she seemed confused on this, for she also believed art should be androgynous. 'The female element implicit within the male'.

Ethel's passion for women obviously went far beyond the platonic. 'From the first, my most ardent sentiments were bestowed on members of my own sex'. Though there is hardly any doubt that passionate correspondence and hours of conversation were the main outlets of her friendships. Perhaps this sublimation of sexual energy was a driving force for her composition, never at any time being tempted (as one of 'life's bachelors') by the material security and apparent freedom of matrimony. This did not mean that she could dispense with the male traditions; she only arrived at a point to start from.

How have women composers complained musically? With tortured discords and mutilated rhythms? Certainly, when they have composed in a 'feminine' way, the rule applies. From the light filigrees of Chaminade that lack the depth of Faure to the countless genteel reveries, preludes and songs of lost composers; or else, like Clara and Ethel, they have been hamstrung by the male rules. Their technical excellence in no way compensates for the unoriginality, dullness and false pomposity which they felt obliged to adopt in order to be accepted as 'serious' composers.

Thanks to the first feminist wave Ethel stood alone and demanded a hearing, she was music's Aphra Benn. Lutyens, Musgrave, Maconchy and Tate have proved to be the 'Bronte's' of women's musical heritage and there were earlier flashes of genius in the works of Lilly Boulanger and Tailleferre. The numbers of young composers are rapidly increasing thanks to the vastly improved educational opportunities that blossomed into the second feminist wave of 1968, somewhere, I am sure, music's Virginia Woolf is awaiting recognition.

GLOSSARY:

GERMAN SIXTH - a type of chord.
 MASS - the words of the Roman Catholic service set to music.
 POLONAISE - a national dance of Poland, perfected into a form of piano piece by Chopin.
 COUNTERPOINT - a form of composition in which two independent parts simultaneously form a whole.
 BEECHAM - (Sir Thomas) an extremely chauvinistic conductor.
 CHAMINADE - (Cecile) 1857 - 1944 French composer.
 FAURE - 1845-1924 French composer.
 ELIZABETH LUTYENS, ELIZABETH MACONCHY, THEA MUSGRAVE, PHYLLIS TATE, LILI BOULANGER, GERMAINE TAILLEFERRE - composers born at the turn of the century.
 PARRY - 1848-1948
 STANFORD - 1852-1924
 STERNDALE BENNET - 1816-1875
 STAINER - 1840-1901
 SULLIVAN - 1842-1900
 (all English composers)



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